

Billings Downtown
Starts here.

STRATEGIC PLAN

DREAM BIG, DOWNTOWN BILLINGS

DOWNTOWN BILLINGS ALLIANCE
FEBRUARY 2018

AUTHENTICITY



Downtowns provide memorable and authentic experiences. They distinguish themselves as neighborhoods apart from others in their region and stand out as unique global destinations. Further, they accommodate authentic food, shopping, entertainment, individuals and groups.

DIVERSITY



Downtowns are for everyone. They are accommodating to individuals and groups alike. They go out of their way to make people from all backgrounds feel welcomed, included, and celebrated. They champion what makes us all unique. Downtowns provide opportunities for all.

CENTRALITY



Downtowns are the geographical, psychological, economic, and emotional center of a region. They draw people in and provide opportunity, exploration, services, and experiences. They are accessible from within their own core and across the transect of a region.

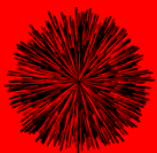
PROSPERITY



Downtowns provide economic opportunity for individuals of all backgrounds. They are the home to corporate giants and entrepreneurs alike. They provide jobs and build prosperous regions. Downtowns also serve as economic gathering places for global conventions and ideas.

DOWNTOWN PRINCIPLES FOUND IN DOWNTOWN BILLINGS

CELEBRATORY



Downtowns are where regions celebrate life, love, friendship, and community. Arts, culture, fine dining, history, sports, and the vibrancy of downtown themselves are all celebrated in the urban core. When friends and loved ones go out for the night, it is downtown!

DENSITY



Downtowns embrace the physical density of structures and the social closeness of people. Downtown density encourages economies of scale, shared experiences, and collaboration. It intentionally forces the development of community and the character of its environment.

CONNECTIVITY



Downtowns are physically connected in the region and within the neighborhood. They provide multimodal transportation and embrace virtual connectivity through advanced technology. Downtown connectivity gets us where we need to go but also connects us, so we get there together.

CREATIVITY



Downtowns accommodate artistic expression. They celebrate individuality and community through diverse media, architecture, and enterprise. Further, downtowns encourage innovation and serve as living laboratories solving the world's problems.

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INTRODUCTION

OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT

Billings is the largest metropolitan statistical area (MSA) at the central point of a six-state region that includes Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Wyoming, and Idaho. The Billings region is poised for expansion and can maintain its authenticity, yet experience sustainable and productive growth by creating, expanding, and attracting diverse businesses, organizations, and residents from across the multi-state region.

Downtown Billings is positioned to accommodate this opportunity and be the economic, cultural, and social center of the Northern Rockies and Plains States.

With the execution of strategies set forth in this strategic plan, Downtown Billings Alliance will lead the deliberate and forward-thinking growth of the Billings region. ***Downtown Billings starts here.***



Downtown Billings Strategic Plan Community Forum. Credit: Bronte Wittpenn

OVERVIEW

ABOUT DOWNTOWN BILLINGS ALLIANCE

The Downtown Billings Alliance is comprised of three separate non-profits. The Downtown Billings Association (DBA), the merchant/membership organization, was created in 1985. The DBA promotes and advocates for a vital city center through programmatic and place-making elements like event management, public art, and greenspace development. The Downtown Billings Partnership (DBP), the economic development and redevelopment arm of the Alliance, was created in 1998, to implement the transformative 1997 Framework Plan, the downtown master plan. The DBP assists the City of Billings with Tax Increment Financing (TIF)^{1,2} investment in largely the central business district. Since the implementation of the Framework Plan in 1998, there have been 335 projects totaling over \$66 million in Tax Increment Financing District (TIFD) funds and over \$234 million in private investment to revitalize and grow the city center, downtown Billings. The Business Improvement District (BID), the property-owner organization, was created in 2005 and renewed for 10 years in 2015; the BID manages clean, safe, and outreach programs.

DBA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Membership • Events • Place Making • Advocacy • Marketing 	DBP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban Renewal • Development • Tax Increment Financing • Revolving Loan Fund • Property Owner Assistance 	BID <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean & Safe Initiatives • Spare Change for Real Change • Community Innovations • Downtown Resource Officers • BID Street Team / Purple People
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DOWNTOWN BILLINGS ALLIANCE MISSION STATEMENT

The Downtown Billings Alliance leads a dynamic, inclusive, and sustainable approach to ensure the region's urban core is vibrant and growing. The Alliance works each day with businesses, creatives, and civic leaders to provide the economic, cultural, and social opportunities Billings requires to realize a prosperous and exciting future.

¹ "Tax increment financing (TIF) is an alluring tool that allows municipalities to promote economic development by earmarking property tax revenue from increases in assessed values within a designated TIF district."

² Richard Dye and David Merriman, "Tax Increment Financing: A Tool for Local Economic Development", <http://www.lincolnst.edu/publications/articles/tax-increment-financing>, (accessed December 13, 2017)

MESSAGE TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The collective Downtown Billings Alliance Board of Directors has the unique and important responsibility in asserting downtown's economic and cultural role in the Billings region. Members of the three separate Boards represent the DBA, DBP, and the BID. They are responsible for authorizing activities, appropriations, and expenditures and providing leadership and oversight to ensure their respective organization is fulfilling its member or public duties. Further, it is the members' responsibility to simultaneously unite the three organizations to speak with one voice to realize the Downtown Billings Alliance Mission Statement. Finally, the Downtown Billings Alliance Board of Directors must serve as the lead implementers of the Downtown Billings Alliance Strategic Plan, while strategically working with staff and partners as appropriate.

MESSAGE TO THE DOWNTOWN BILLINGS ALLIANCE STRATEGIC PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE

The Steering Committee was crucial in driving the direction of the strategic planning process from a community leadership standpoint. Members of the Steering Committee are acutely aware of conditions in downtown Billings and provided valuable input on strategies, objectives, and goals that have been included in the strategic plan. The Steering Committee members are downtown champions and must work with the Downtown Billings Alliance Board of Directors and other stakeholders to guide the plan during implementation and throughout the plan's lifecycle. The Steering Committee held the following roles throughout the strategic planning process and into implementation:

- Assisted with oversight of the strategic planning process
- Served as content experts
- Provided comprehensive and critical feedback throughout the process
- Represented the community's interests through leadership positions
- Ensured that community interests were articulated in the plan
- Served as ambassadors throughout the community engagement process
- Champion the plan throughout implementation and its lifecycle

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many individuals have contributed to the development of the Downtown Billings Alliance Strategic Plan. We would like to especially acknowledge the Steering Committee who have demonstrated outstanding leadership in undertaking this process to develop a transformative and future-forward thinking plan for downtown Billings. The strategic plan would not have been possible without the support of the City of Billings immediate past and current City Council. Further, this plan would not have been possible without the engagement and essential input from the DBA, DBP, and BID Board of Directors, crucial economic and community partners, residents, and Downtown Billings Alliance Staff.

We offer a special appreciation and acknowledgement to those who provided resources, recommendations, feedback, and enthusiasm throughout the entire strategic planning process including the following key individuals:

CITY OF BILLINGS MAYORS

- Former Mayor Thomas Hanel
- Mayor Bill Cole

CITY OF BILLINGS CITY COUNCIL

Immediate Past Council

- Shaun Brown
- Larry Brewster
- Angela Cimmino
- Richard Clark
- Brent Cromley
- Chris Friedel
- Richard McFadden
- Ryan Sullivan
- Al Swanson
- Mike Yakawich

Current City Council

- Larry Brewster
- Shaun Brown
- Richard Clark
- Brent Cromley
- Frank Ewalt
- Chris Friedel
- Denise Joy
- Penny Ronning
- Ryan Sullivan
- Mike Yakawich

DOWNTOWN BILLINGS ALLIANCE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Downtown Billings Association (DBA)

- Derek Aspinwall, Aspinwall Mountain Wear
- Dyani Bingham, Rocky Mountain Tribal Leader's Council
- Matt Blakeslee, Art House Cinema & Pub

- Mariah Carpenter, Joy of Living
- Travis Dimond, Berkshire Hathaway Floberg Real Estate
- Kris Fairlee, Treasurer and First Interstate Bank
- David Fishbaugh, Parking Board of Directors
- Biff Hagstrom, At-Large Member and iGruv Eyewear
- Amanda Lechner, VP Projects and Promotions and Pillar Event Services
- Sam Merrick, VP Advocacy and Metrapark
- Phil Nelson, Stockman Bank
- Darren Rich, Billings Symphony
- Brandon Scala, Valley FCU
- Toni Schneider, CTA Architects
- Maisie Sulser-Handley, Chair and Restôr Design + Build
- John Walsh, MSU-Billings
- Chris White, Albertson's
- Ziggy Ziegler, VP Membership and Stella's Restaurant & Bakery

Downtown Billings Partnership (DBP)

- Steve Arveschoug, Big Sky Economic Development
- Greta Besch-Moen, Billings Public Schools
- David Fishbaugh, Parking Board of Directors
- Randy Hafer, High Plains Architects
- Joni Harman, Swift Lofts
- Bruce McCandles, City of Billings
- Sam Merrick, Metrapark
- Norman Miller, Miller Building
- Jeremy Morgret, Stockman Bank
- Kim Olsen, O2 Architects
- James A. Patten, PPBG Law
- Dennis Pitman, Yellowstone County
- Darren Rich, Billings Symphony
- Ryan Sullivan, City of Billings

DOWNTOWN BILLINGS ALLIANCE STRATEGIC PLAN



- Maisie Sulser-Handley, Restôr Design + Build
- Steve Tostenrud, First Interstate Bank
- Jock West, West Law Firm

Business Improvement District (BID)

- Randy Hafer, Chair and High Plains Architects
- Sean Lynch, Pub Station
- Rudi Marten, Secretary/Treasurer and Clark Marten Photography
- Eddie Schmidt, Billings Army/Navy
- Harvey Singh, Singh Contracting
- Scott Turner, Billings Times
- Mike Tuss, Vice Chair and CTA Architects

DOWNTOWN BILLINGS COMMUNITY INNOVATIONS

- Lisa Harmon, Executive Director
- Greg Krueger, Director of Development
- Jeremy Morgret, Stockman Bank
- Maisie Sulser-Handley, New Interim Economic Development Director, DBA Board Chair, and Restôr Design + Build
- Tina Volek, Former City of Billings City Administrator

DOWNTOWN BILLINGS ALLIANCE STRATEGIC PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE

- Derek Aspinwall, DBA Board and Aspinwall Mountain Wear
- Karen Baumgart, NextGen Leadership and Big Sky Economic Development
- Dyani Bingham, DBA Board and Rocky Mountain Tribal Leader's Council
- Amanda Boerboom, NextGen Leadership
- Kris Fairlee, DBA Board and First Interstate Bank
- Randy Hafer, BID Board Chair and High Plains Architects
- Biff Hagstrom, DBA Board and iGruv Eyewear
- Joni Harman, DBP Board and Swift Lofts
- Amanda Lechner Sanderson, DBA Board and Pillar Event Services
- Brooke LeVander, NextGen Leadership
- Sean Lynch, BID Board and Pub Station
- Rudi Marten, BID Board and Clark Marten Photography
- Sam Merrick, Executive Committee, DBA Board, and Metrapark

- Janine Mix, Retail Consultant
- Jeremy Morgret, DBP Board Past Chair and Stockman Bank
- James A. Patten, DBP Board Chair and PPBG Law
- Emily Petroff, NextGen Leadership
- Kyle Schlichenmayer, NextGen Leadership
- Julie Seedhouse, DBA Member, Resident
- Maisie Sulser-Handley, DBA Board Chair and Restôr Design + Build
- Mike Tuss, BID Board and CTA Architects
- Ziggy Ziegler, DBA Board and Stella's Restaurant & Bakery

DOWNTOWN BILLINGS ALLIANCE TEAM MEMBERS

- Lisa Harmon, Executive Director
- Greg Krueger, Director of Development
- Joe Stout, Director of Operations
- Virginia Bryan, President - ArtWalk
- Natasha Potratz, Director of Arts & Events
- Josiah Hugs, Resource Outreach Coordinator
- Officer Tony Nichols, Downtown Resource Officer
- Officer Matt Frank, Downtown Resource Officer
- Jerriid Gray, BID Street Team
- James Chandler, BID Street Team
- Mark Cichosz, BID Street Team
- Molly Schiltz, Officer Manager
- Ray Porrello, Executive Assistant/Member Relations
- Mel Barbour, Media & Outreach Coordinator
- Katy Easton, New President & CEO
- Maisie Sulser-Handley, New Interim Economic Development Director

THOMAS P. MILLER & ASSOCIATES – CONSULTING PARTNER TEAM

- Dustin Lester – Project Lead
- Jack Woods – Project Manager
- Katie Meyer – Downtown Strategic Advisor
- Tom West – Downtown Strategic Advisor
- Aletha Dunston – Downtown Strategic Advisor
- Joseph Finke – Research and Data Strategic Advisor
- Natalia Rodriguez – Project Support
- Ashlee Wilson Fujawa – Marketing Specialist
- Kortney Petry – Marketing Specialist
- Max Hammer – Landscape Architect

Engaged Stakeholders

The Downtown Billings Alliance Strategic Plan will guide Board and Team leadership on how to leverage organizational and downtown strengths and take advantage of emerging opportunities to ensure downtown remains a vibrant and growing center for the region. The commitment to the strategic planning process and implementation illustrates the strong leadership found in the downtown Billings community. This is represented by those who are devoted to enhancing the operations and efficient governance of the Downtown Billings Alliance resources. Further, it is a testament to the engaged community that passionately demands that downtown Billings realize its full potential. Thank you to everyone who offered their perspectives, knowledge, expertise, concepts, and support throughout the process. Your efforts are very much appreciated!



Downtown Billings Strategic Plan Community Forum. Credit: Bronte Wittpenn

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Downtown Billings Alliance has undertaken a bold approach to understand and enhance the organization's programming and operations through the development of the Downtown Billings Alliance Strategic Plan. Further, this plan identifies major transformative initiatives for downtown, of which Downtown Billings Alliance will take a lead role in implementing. Organizationally, the strategic plan will address opportunities for operational enhancements regarding programming; membership; leadership – Board and Team development; human resources; and fiscal and organizational sustainability.

STRATEGIC PLAN DEFINITION

A strategic plan is a living document developed over time by related stakeholders to guide an organization through deliberate change into the future with the goal of continuous improvement for internal and external audiences.

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Downtown Billings Alliance selected Thomas P. Miller & Associates (TPMA) to work with the Alliance Team members led by Lisa Harmon; a Steering Committee; the DBA, DBP, and BID Boards; engaged citizenry, and key stakeholders to develop the strategic plan. The plan will enhance the organization's programming, operations, and affirm the Alliance's lead role in the downtown Billings community. Furthermore, the Alliance Team stressed the need to enhance efficiencies, strengthen internal and external communication, and improve citizen and business engagement.

Downtown Billings Alliance selected TPMA to guide the organization through the process, conduct research, facilitate discussions, demonstrate best practices, and coordinate the production of the strategic plan with a focus on implementation. The planning process included an approach that ensured support and alignment with the initiatives of the broader City and region, prior plans, stakeholders, businesses, and citizens.

The strategic planning process integrated the following important quantitative and qualitative elements:

- Two Week-Long On-Site Engagements in downtown Billings:
 - July and October 2017
 - Qualitative Research and Engagement:

The combination of Steering Committee, Board, focus group, interview, community forum, and other community engagements provided the qualitative data that complemented TPMA's industry and peer research, which ultimately directed the goals, desired outcomes, and recommendations for the strategic plan.

 - Groups Included:
 - Steering Committee
 - DBA, DBP, and BID Board Members
 - Key Partners
 - Engaged Residents
 - Business Leaders
 - Downtown Billings Alliance Team
 - Engagements in the Form of:
 - Steering Committee Engagements

- Onsite and ongoing throughout the process
 - Board Presentations
 - Fiscal Sustainability Working Group
 - Focus Groups
 - Infrastructure (10 attendees)
 - Entrepreneurship/Small Business (5 attendees)
 - Downtown Identity (10 attendees)
 - Public Arts (13 attendees)
 - NextGen (17 attendees)
 - American Indian Culture, Heritage, and Services (9 attendees)
 - Economic Development (11 attendees)
 - Multimodal Streets (8 attendees)
 - Interviews (14 interviews)
 - Community Forum (150+ attendees)
 - Walking Tours
- Contributing Independent Research:
 - Downtown Billings Industry Assessment (Appendix A)
 - Peer Downtown Review and Trends Report (Appendix B)
 - Public Forum Engagement Analysis (Appendix C)
 - Funding Environment Scan (Appendix D)
 - Fiscal Analysis (Appendix E)
- Prior Plans and Reports:
 - Framework Downtown Billings, 1997
 - Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc., Fischer & Associates, and A&E Architects, Montana Tradeport Authority, City of Billings
 - Market Analysis, Proposed Executive Conference Center, Billings, Montana, 2002
 - Ernst & Associates, Inc., Downtown Billings Partnership
 - Downtown Two-Way Conversion Feasibility Study, 2006
 - Interstate Engineering, Inc., City of Billings
 - Billings Downtown Circulator Study, 2012
 - Transportation Consultants, Inc., City of Billings
 - Convention/Conference Center, Market & Feasibility, Billings, Montana, 2015
 - HVS, Billings Chamber of Commerce
 - Downtown Hotel Study, Billings, Montana
 - PKF Consulting USA, Downtown Billings Partnership
 - Business Summary [downtown Billings], Governor's Office of Economic Development, 2015
 - Billings Police Department 2015 Annual Report, 2015
 - Billings Police Department
 - Downtown Billings Housing Strategy, 2017
 - Economic & Planning Systems, Inc., Downtown Billings Urban Renewal District, East Billings Urban Renewal District
 - ONE Big Sky Center, Concept Development Plan, 2017
 - Landmark Development

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

The Downtown Billings Alliance Strategic Plan: Dream Big Downtown Billings embodies the engagement of community stakeholders and integration of objective research for more than half a year. The plan aggressively directs Downtown Billings Alliance to lead the development of four major transformative initiatives including Downtown Housing; Model of Inclusion of Diverse Cultures; Multi-Modal Streets and Connectivity; and Mixed-use Multi-Anchor Development Opportunities. Further, the plan aligns strategies and actions for the operational, programmatic, and partnership work that Downtown Billings Alliance leads for the sustainable and economic growth of downtown and ultimately the region.



GOALS

GOALS FOR THE FUTURE OF DOWNTOWN BILLINGS

Goals define what downtown Billings will become. They are the foundation of what the transformative initiatives and strategic recommendations have been built upon. Goals direct the strategy and the associated actions and resources that must be aligned to realize the downtown Billings of tomorrow.

GOAL

A SUSTAINABLE DOWNTOWN BILLINGS ALLIANCE

Downtown Billings Alliance will assert its role as the sustainable champion of the downtown Billings community through growth in membership, revenue, engaged partners, and authority and influence over the holistic development of downtown.

GOAL

A VIBRANT AND CONNECTED 24-HOUR DOWNTOWN

Downtown Billings Alliance will lead the continued transformation of downtown to become a 24-hour vibrant nucleus of connected culture, business, entertainment, and downtown living.

GOAL

A STRONG DOWNTOWN IDENTITY

Downtown Billings Alliance will lead the evolution of downtown's identity to assure downtown is viewed as an inclusive, inviting, and distinct destination where the city comes together to celebrate community.

GOAL

A DIVERSE ECONOMIC ENGINE

Downtown Billings Alliance will leverage existing and new resources to support the growth of downtown to ensure it remains a diverse economic engine that attracts investment for the Billings region.

An aerial, high-angle photograph of a city skyline. A tall, dark, rectangular building stands out on the left. In the center-right, a large building features a prominent archway. The foreground shows a street with parked cars and a white van. The sky is filled with heavy, grey clouds.

TRANSFORMATIVE INITIATIVES

TRANSFORMATIVE INITIATIVES

Transformative Initiatives are those which permeate the culture, economy, and physical environment of downtown, and when implemented, have a lasting impact on the community. The following transformative initiatives are top-priorities for the downtown Billings community. The Downtown Billings Alliance, partners, and stakeholders must align the recommended resources in the strategic plan to ensure accountability for these initiatives to be realized.



DOWNTOWN HOUSING

The housing initiative is imperative to realize an increase in downtown residential population through targeted housing strategies and tactics. An increase in housing options will transform downtown to meet this plan's goals for a vibrant and prosperous downtown.



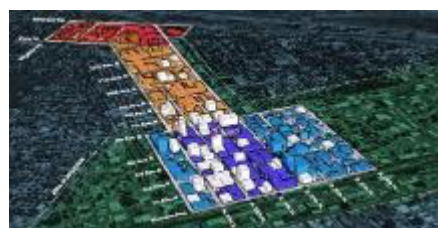
MODEL OF INCLUSION OF DIVERSE CULTURES

Downtown Billings will be viewed as a model destination, where the entire community can come together, without prejudice, to learn and celebrate the variety of cultures, which have and continue to influence the rich tapestry of the region.



MULTI-MODAL STREETS AND CONNECTIVITY

Downtown Billings will be viewed as a safe, attractive, and connected environment, which encourages downtown visitors and residents to walk and cycle between destinations to support increased multi-modal activity and communication within this unique economic and cultural asset.



MIXED-USE MULTI-ANCHOR DEVELOPMENT

A game-changing series of infill development will create expansive economic development opportunities. Development will be anchor - based between a new convention center-anchored lifestyle district and a health & wellness district, functioning as the catalyst for infill growth centered in downtown Billings.

DOWNTOWN HOUSING

INCREASE DOWNTOWN RESIDENTIAL POPULATION THROUGH TARGETED DOWNTOWN HOUSING INITIATIVES.

Significance of this Initiative

A healthy downtown residential population can positively impact pedestrian traffic, the retail market, evening activity, safety, community, and the economy overall. A vibrant downtown residential community relies on available and appropriate housing inventory, price points, and social and cultural amenities. While Billings has much to offer in the way of restaurants, nightlife, and cultural activities, there is a demonstrated shortage of available downtown housing options. Since 2008, there have been no increases in the rental inventory in downtown Billings and EBURD. There are nine developments with a total of 190 units, 81 (43%) of which are part of one senior living project.

This year, Downtown Billings Alliance and EBURD commissioned The Downtown Billings Workforce Housing Strategy, which should be referenced for a holistic review of downtown housing. The commissioning of this study along with the public forum data demonstrates that housing development is a high priority for many diverse stakeholders in downtown Billings. The execution of the housing strategies and positioning of housing development as a top priority is fully aligned with the recommendations in the strategic plan and in fact integral to the overall success of these initiatives.

The rental housing market is growing nationally, with a steep rise in young professionals and empty nesters choosing to live in downtowns. Billings has the opportunity to capture this trend by focusing efforts on the development of urban lofts, affordable rental units, and upper floor housing.



Credit: Architect: High Plains Architects; Photographer: Tim Struck

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

STRATEGY

Prioritize Rental Housing Development Projects in Allocation of DBP Resources Including TIF and Revolving Loan Fund

Aligned Closest with the Goal: A Vibrant and Connected 24-Hour Downtown

ACTION ITEM #1:

Create a specific and transparent plan for TIF funds and revolving loan opportunities for upper floor housing and new housing development projects in the downtown.

ACTION ITEM #2:

Market the availability of TIF and all other financial incentives for housing development through a campaign with support from regional economic development partners and drivers.

ACTION ITEM #3:

Prioritize model housing development projects that test the market, establishes a price floor, and proves viability.

ACTION MATRIX:

PRIORITIZE RENTAL HOUSING DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

ACTION ITEM #1:

TIF and Revolving Loan Fund Opportunities for Upper Floor Housing

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:

Six (6) Months – One (1) Year

ACTION ITEM #2:

Market TIF and Resources

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:

One (1) Year – Three (3) Years

ACTION ITEM #3:

Prioritize Model Housing Development Projects

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:

One (1) Year – Three (3) Years

Responsible Department(s):	Responsible Board(s):	Responsible Partners(s):	Potential Funding Source(s):	Alignment w/ Prior Plan(s):	Performance Measure(s):	Benefit(s):
President & CEO; Economic Development Director	DBP	Billings Association of Realtors	TIF; New District Funding Model	Downtown Billings Housing Strategy, 2017; ONE Big Sky; Framework; FY 15-19 City Council; Urban Renewal	Increase in downtown housing inventory.	Increased downtown units will increase downtown living and overall economic, cultural, and social vibrancy. Further, it will increase talent attraction.

STRATEGY

Support Small Developers and Existing Property Owners in the Transition of Their Upper Floors to Residential Units

Aligned Closest with the Goal: A Vibrant and Connected 24-Hour Downtown

The funding gap for renovation of upper floors can be cost prohibitive for small developers and property owners. The DBP can facilitate opportunities to fill those funding gaps through subsidy and tax abatement programs.

ACTION ITEM #1:

Conduct an inventory of vacant or underutilized upper floors in the downtown. Use this inventory to prioritize and target properties based on property owner willingness, strategic location, impact of investment, and number of units developed.

ACTION ITEM #2:

Work with local, regional, and state partners to develop an upper floor development training program or written support guide detailing the codes and requirements for upper floor housing.

ACTION ITEM #3:

Work with the City of Billings on specific allocation of CDBG funding for an Upper Floor Rehab Program, potential tax abatement, or moratorium programs. Identify any specific code, fire, or planning requirements that may be cost prohibitive for upper floor rehab and advocate for upper floor living consideration.

ACTION MATRIX:

Support Small Developers and Existing Property Owners in the Transition of Their Upper Floors to Residential Units

ACTION ITEM #1:

Inventory Vacant or Underutilized Upper Floors

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:

One (1) Year – Three (3) Years

ACTION ITEM #2:

Upper Floor Development Training Program

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:

One (1) Year – Three (3) Years

ACTION ITEM #3:

Coordinate with the City of Billings
on Funding and Codes

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:

Six (6) Months – One (1) Year

Responsible Department(s):	Responsible Board(s):	Responsible Partners(s):	Potential Funding Source(s):	Alignment w/ Prior Plan(s):	Performance Measure(s):	Benefit(s):
President & CEO; Economic Development Director	DBP	Billings Association of Realtors	TIF; New District Funding Model	Downtown Billings Housing Strategy, 2017; ONE Big Sky; Framework; FY 15- 19 City Council; Urban Renewal	Increase in downtown housing inventory.	Increased downtown units will increase downtown living and overall economic, cultural, and social vibrancy.

STRATEGY

Promote Downtown Billings as an Attractive Place to Live

Aligned Closest with the Goal: A Vibrant and Connected 24-Hour Downtown

ACTION ITEM #1:

Develop an annual urban living tour in downtown Billings.

ACTION ITEM #2:

Create a downtown residents committee that can offer social, education, and volunteer opportunities for existing and new residents, enhancing the sense of community and developing downtown living ambassadors through grassroots engagement.

ACTION ITEM #3:

Utilize web and social media to share and promote the public amenities, walkability, and sense of community in the downtown as specific assets for choosing downtown living.

ACTION MATRIX:

Promote downtown living

ACTION ITEM #1:

Urban Living Tour

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:

One (1) Year – Three (3) Years

ACTION ITEM #2:

Downtown Residents Committee

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:

Six (6) Months – One (1) Year

ACTION ITEM #3:

Social Media to Promote Downtown Living

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:

Six (6) Months – One (1) Year

Responsible Department(s):	Responsible Board(s):	Responsible Partners(s):	Potential Funding Source(s):	Alignment w/ Prior Plan(s):	Performance Measure(s):	Benefit(s):
President & CEO; Economic Development Director	DBP	Billings Association of Realtors	TBD	Downtown Billings Housing Strategy, 2017; ONE Big Sky; Framework; FY 15-19 City Council; Urban Renewal	Increase in downtown housing inventory.	Increased downtown units will increase downtown living and overall economic, cultural, and social vibrancy.

MODEL OF INCLUSION OF DIVERSE CULTURES

Downtown Billings will be a model of inclusion and celebration of the rich and diverse cultures that make up the Billings community. Downtown Billings Alliance will assume a leadership role in making downtown Billings the place where the entire community can come together without prejudice, to learn and celebrate the variety of cultures, which have and continue to influence the rich tapestry of the region.

Significance of this Initiative

In embracing diversity and highlighting the positive aspects of the variety of cultures that create the fabric of downtown, Billings has an opportunity to enhance its economic competitiveness for great jobs and talent. The impacts of cultural diversity on goods made and sold are well documented.

“Diversity over several dimensions has been considered by economists as valuable both in consumption and production.” Researchers attribute the diversity of available consumption goods and services as one of the attractive features of cities. “The ‘love of variety’ in preferences and technology as the building block of their theory of spatial development: the production of a larger variety of goods and services in a particular location increases the productivity and utility of people living in that location.”³ From a social standpoint, when a member of a minority group feels accepted and valued, social problems such as addiction, criminal activity, and dependence on entitlement programs can be expected to diminish.

Throughout the planning process, American Indian participants, as well as others who work with this population, report that unflattering stereotypes and long-held prejudices tend to have negative impacts on those who come to Billings from the reservations to seek opportunity, employment, and services. This narrative was not written overnight and will not be overcome quickly, however taking deliberate and strategic steps to change the dialogue can start a path to a more robust economy, cohesive society, and better opportunities for all.

³ Gianmarco I.P. Ottaviano and Giovanni Peri, “The economic value of cultural diversity: evidence from US cities” *Journal of Economic Geography*, Volume 6, Issue 1, 1 January 2006, Pages 9–44, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jeg/lbi002>, (accessed December 7, 2017).

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

STRATEGY

Leadership Initiatives

Aligned Closest with the Goal: A Strong Downtown Identity

Downtown Billings Alliance will facilitate and support the inclusion of minority representatives in leadership roles in downtown and throughout the community.

Alliance members have demonstrated over the years that their efforts can have a dramatic impact on the community. With tremendous successes that are breathing new life in downtown districts, this political and social capital should be leveraged to assure that downtown is a place where all Billingsites and visitors feel welcomed and valued.

In order to assure that minority participation provides real value to the community and does not become mere token representation, organizations focused on serving the various cultural groups must be engaged in the identification of current and future leaders.

ACTION ITEM #1:

Encourage the City to adopt a policy to require appointments to boards, commissions, committees, and task forces to reflect the full richness of cultures and minority populations in Billings.

ACTION ITEM #2:

Develop a resource guide and assist organizations with identifying candidates for leadership roles based on knowledge and skills to avoid tokenism.

ACTION ITEM #3:

Collaborate with organizations such as the Tribal Leadership Council, Billings Chamber of Commerce, and others to establish, promote and facilitate servant leadership^{4,5} training to enhance current leader skills and assure a talent pipeline of future leaders.

⁴ "A servant-leader focuses primarily on the growth and well-being of people and the communities to which they belong. While traditional leadership generally involves the accumulation and exercise of power by one at the "top of the pyramid," servant leadership is different. The servant-leader shares power, puts the needs of others first and helps people develop and perform as highly as possible."

⁵ Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership, "The Servant as Leader" <https://www.greenleaf.org/what-is-servant-leadership/>, (accessed December 10, 2017).

ACTION MATRIX:

Leadership Initiatives

ACTION ITEM #1:

Encourage Diverse Leadership Appointments

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:

Six (6) Months – One (1) Year

ACTION ITEM #2:

Resource Guide to Identify Diverse Leadership Candidates

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:

One (1) Year – Three (3) Years

ACTION ITEM #3:

Servant Leadership Training

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:

One (1) Year – Three (3) Years

Responsible Department(s):	Responsible Board(s):	Responsible Partners(s):	Potential Funding Source(s):	Alignment w/ Prior Plan(s):	Performance Measure(s):	Benefit(s):
President & CEO	DBA	Tribal Leadership Council; Billings Chamber of Commerce	First Nations Development Institute; Tribal Leadership Council; Billings Chamber of Commerce	Framework	Increase in community-wide leaders appointed or elected from diverse back-grounds.	Diminished social issues and demonstration that Billings is a diverse and global community.

STRATEGY

Cultural Diversity

Aligned Closest with the Goal: A Strong Downtown Identity

In 2016, the Big Sky Pride celebration was held in Billings for the first time in a decade. Building on the success of this event celebrating the LGBTQ community, downtown has the opportunity to embrace inclusiveness by celebrating other minority communities such as Latinos and American Indians.

Finding the balance of inclusion and celebration in a non-threatening way depends on finding common ground and shared experiences. Celebrations often come together around food, music, art, and entertainment. Such events also provide opportunities to tell stories, educate the greater community about a culture's impact on history and for neighbors to get to know each other as people in a positive, non-threatening environment.

Success will depend on starting small. Designating a week or month and programming entertainment and events focused on a specific culture or tribe could be cultivated and grown over time. These could take the form of lunchtime events or weekend festivals, encouraging restaurants to feature related ethnic dishes and art exhibits or programming music, dance, and other entertainment at Skypoint are just a few ways to cultivate these types of celebrations. Other approaches could include promotional activities designed to promote existing events and observances in the community, such as a weeklong downtown preview of the Montana State University Billings (MSUB) Pow Wow with dancers, music, and food or sports tournaments with skills, exhibitions, and activities in downtown locations.

According to MSUB, the Pow Wow is beginning to outgrow its location on the MSUB campus. The Alliance should explore ways to help host Pow Wow events in the core area and build this spectacular cultural event into a downtown-wide celebration by welcoming visitors and recognizing all of the participating nations.

ACTION ITEM #1:

Implement weekly or monthly themed celebrations to encourage various cultures within the community to tell their story through food, music, dance, art, historical exhibits, and other cultural expressions.

ACTION ITEM #2:

Partner with MSUB and the tribal leaders to expand the Pow Wow into downtown and focus downtown's participation on story-telling, history, and recognition of the contributions of American Indians.

ACTION MATRIX:

Celebrate Cultural Diversity

ACTION ITEM #1:

Weekly or Monthly Cultural Celebrations

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:

One (1) Year – Three (3) Years

ACTION ITEM #2:

Expand the Pow Wow into Downtown

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:

One (1) Year – Three (3) Years

Responsible Department(s):	Responsible Board(s):	Responsible Partners(s):	Potential Funding Source(s):	Alignment w/ Prior Plan(s):	Performance Measure(s):	Benefit(s):
President & CEO; Director of Arts & Events; Media & Outreach Coordinator	DBA	Tribal Leadership Council; Billings Chamber of Commerce	First Nations Development Institute; Tribal Leadership Council; Billings Chamber of Commerce	Framework	Increase in diverse cultural events celebrated downtown.	Diminished social issues and demonstration that Billings is a diverse and global community.

STRATEGY

American Indian Culture

Education, Celebration, and Service Delivery

Aligned Closest with the Goal: A Strong Downtown Identity

Throughout the planning process, American Indians participating in interviews, focus groups, and the community forum expressed concerns about discrimination, prejudice, and a general feeling of a lack of acceptance within the greater Billings community. Taking steps to build greater understanding of the American Indian experience and instill pride within the various tribes could present downtown with opportunities to change the narrative, create new businesses, and help solve social struggles often associated with a population that does not otherwise find hope and opportunity.

Visitors seeking to learn about the native culture or purchase authentic American Indian arts and wares cannot find them in abundance in a city surrounded by more than seven nations. American Indians arriving from the reservations in search of jobs and services have no single place to go for guidance and support. While MSUB is in the process of creating a center on its campus, this may be perceived as only for students and faculty and may not serve all of the needs identified today and in the future.

Other cities across the United States have developed highly successful American Indian Centers, some of which focus on educating the community about culture through learning, exhibits, and events, while others focus on providing resources and services to the American Indian populations in their region.

Examples of these centers are seen below:

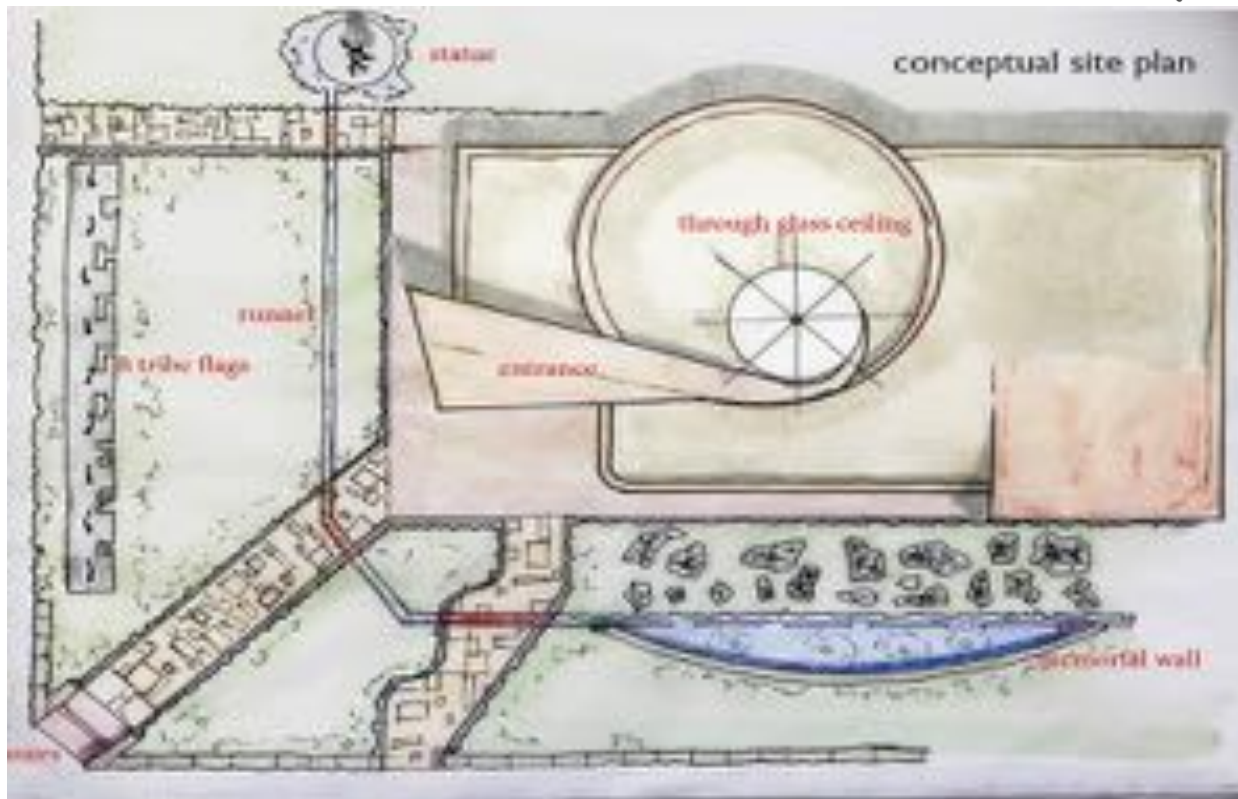
- Baltimore American Indian Center Heritage Museum
- Helena Indian Alliance
- Indian Family Health Clinic
- Indian Pueblo Cultural Center
- Kansas City Indian Center
- National Council on Urban Indian Health
- Missoula Urban Indian Health Center
- Minneapolis American Indian Center
- Native American Connections, Inc.
- Native American Development Center
- North American Indian Alliance
- Phoenix Indian Center
- Shiprock - Northern Navajo Medical Center
- United Indians of All Tribes Foundation



American Indian Culture Center – Downtown Billings. Perspective. Max Hammer, 2017

Through combining the concepts of cultural education and celebration with service referrals and support in a single facility, downtown Billings has the opportunity to welcome American Indians seeking opportunities and services as well as provide a platform to instill pride and educate visitors and the community about the native experience and culture.

Another issue identified during the process, which could provide a relatively quick, inexpensive, and high return is to provide leadership training for American Indians. This could be a program started with the American Indian community but could eventually expand to provide training for people of all cultures and existing leaders and to create a pipeline of future leaders, by focusing on young people interested in servant leadership on a variety of topics. Ultimately, this leadership training will be housed in the American Indian Culture Center in downtown Billings.



American Indian Culture Center – Downtown Billings. Conceptual Site Plan. Max Hammer, 2017

ACTION ITEM #1:

Facilitate formation of, and staff support for, an American Indian steering committee to guide efforts to create the American Indian Culture Center, educate the community by telling the American Indian story, identify opportunities to include native art, cultural symbols, and events into the downtown landscape, and assist in the coordination and communication of services provided to American Indians.

ACTION ITEM #2:

Seek private, public, and non-profit funding sources for the development of the American Indian Culture Center. A potential resource includes the First Nations Development Institute amongst other opportunities.

ACTION ITEM #3:

Coordinate a trip by tribal and downtown leaders to one or more American Indian centers to learn how a center might be developed in downtown Billings.

ACTION ITEM #4:

Provide technical assistance to tribal leadership with land acquisition, design, funding, and development of the American Indian Culture Center.

ACTION ITEM #5:

Identify and promote the economic impact of American Indians and American Indian events on the community, including the MSUB Pow Wow, sports tournaments, and others.

ACTION ITEM #6:

Increase economic opportunity through small business contracting from American Indian businesses.

ACTION MATRIX:

American Indian Culture

Education, Celebration, and Service Delivery

ACTION ITEM #1:

Form a Committee for the Creation of the American Indian Culture Center

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:

Six (6) Months – One (1) Year

ACTION ITEM #2:

Seek Funding for the American Indian Culture Center

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:

One (1) Year – Three (3) Years

ACTION ITEM #3:

Site Visits and Research at Other American Indian Culture Centers

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:

One (1) Year – Three (3) Years

ACTION ITEM #4:

Technical Assistance to Support the Creation of the American Indian Culture Center

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:

One (1) Year – Three (3) Years

ACTION ITEM #5:

Promote the Economic Impact of American Indian Culture in the Billings Region

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:

Six (6) Months – One (1) Year

ACTION ITEM #6:

American Indian Small Business Contracting

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:

Six (6) Months – One (1) Year

Responsible Department(s):	Responsible Board(s):	Responsible Partners(s):	Potential Funding Source(s):	Alignment w/ Prior Plan(s):	Performance Measure(s):	Benefit(s):
President & CEO; Economic Development Director	DBA; DBP	Tribal Leadership Council; Billings Chamber of Commerce; City; County; MDT	First Nations Development Institute; Bureau of Indian Affairs; Tribal Leadership Council; Billings Chamber of Commerce	Framework	Opening of the American Indian Culture Center in downtown Billings.	Celebration, service, and recognition of the historic and current economic, cultural, and social impacts made by the American Indian communities in the Billings region. Demonstration that Billings is a diverse and global community.

MULTI-MODAL STREETS AND CONNECTIVITY

Downtown Billings will be seen as a safe and aesthetically pleasing environment, which encourages downtown visitors and residents to walk and cycle between destinations, co-existing with automobiles and rail, to support increased multi-modal activity within this unique economic and cultural asset.

Significance of this Initiative

Like most downtowns, Billings has made changes to its transportation network to accommodate the automobile and increasingly larger vehicles. In many cases, streets have been converted to one-way pairs and widened, often at the expense of pedestrian space and safety. Little or no consideration for cyclists is evident; understandably as bicycling is relatively new as a popular alternative mode of transportation for workers, shoppers, and residents. Over the years, the goal of moving vehicular traffic through the city center has become paramount in opposition to the concept of slowing traffic to encourage economic activity and provide pedestrians with a sense of safety.

When a crash involves a vehicle and a pedestrian or cyclist, the vehicle will always win that battle. According to data provided by the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT), 12 pedestrians died and more than 500 were injured (64 seriously) in crashes involving vehicles between 2007 and 2016 in Billings. This accounts for nearly 20% of all pedestrian-related crashes in the State of Montana for this ten-year period.⁶ As more people choose walking and cycling as preferred methods of transportation in the downtown area, this number could be expected to rise, if facilities and infrastructure are not improved to enhance safety.

A variety of enhancements, some relatively easy and inexpensive and others requiring more time, study, and significant capital investment, should be implemented to create an environment where pedestrians and cyclists feel safe and are encouraged to spend both time and money in the region's highest concentration of commercial businesses. In such an environment, consumer spending will result in increased sales for businesses, new employment opportunities, and increased revenues for state and local governments. Further, this will enhance downtown Billings' sense of place overall.

⁶ Montana Department of Transportation, "City and Statewide Crash Data (2007-2016): Non-motorists in Crashes, Billings" *Crash Data*, http://www.mdt.mt.gov/other/webdata/external/Planning/crash_data/statewide/current/NON-MOTORISTS-CRASH.XLSX, (accessed December 7, 2017).

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

STRATEGY

Traffic and Bike Study

Aligned Closest with the Goal: A Vibrant and Connected 24-Hour Downtown

Member organizations of the Downtown Billings Alliance will request seats on the study's steering committee and encourage members to participate in all stakeholder and public input opportunities such as public meetings, interviews, focus groups, and other engagements. In addition to leveraging the weight of corporate, community, and political leadership to influence this study and its economic benefits, DBA event planners, Downtown Resource Officers, and the BID Street Team will be encouraged to provide their perspectives to assure the study considers the impacts of improvements on the daily work of keeping downtown clean, safe, and fun.

The Alliance will also provide participants with relevant data and best practice examples to better inform the study and assure that the needs and desires of downtown businesses, residents, and visitors are represented effectively and with a unified voice.

Once the study is completed, assuming the results support the strategy of enhancing the bicycle and pedestrian environment downtown, the Alliance will continue its engagement by monitoring and assisting with implementation where practical.

ACTION ITEM #1:

Secure positions on the Traffic and Bike Study Steering Committee for Alliance members.

ACTION ITEM #2:

Create fact sheets about multi-modal study topics aligned to the goals of this plan and distribute to stakeholders and study participants.

ACTION ITEM #3:

Encourage study consultants to consider the input of DBA event planners, Downtown Resource Officers, and the BID Street Team when making recommendations that will impact the operations of downtown.

ACTION MATRIX:

Traffic and Bike Study

ACTION ITEM #1:

Downtown Billings Alliance Representation on the Traffic and Bike Study Steering Committee

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:

Six (6) Months – One (1) Year

ACTION ITEM #2:

Fact Sheets About Multi-Modal Study Topics

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:

Six (6) Months – One (1) Year

ACTION ITEM #3:

Inclusion of Relevant Downtown Billings Alliance Team Members in Planning

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:

Six (6) Months – One (1) Year

Responsible Department(s):	Responsible Board(s):	Responsible Partners(s):	Potential Funding Source(s):	Alignment w/ Prior Plan(s):	Performance Measure(s):	Benefit(s):
President & CEO; Economic Development Director; Director of Operations	DBA; BID; DBP	City; County; MDT	BID; City; County; MDT; US DOT; Grants; Crowd-funding	2-Way St. Feasibility Study; Framework; FY 15-19 City Council; 2016 City of Billings Growth Policy	Completion of a study that will infuse objective data with strategies to make downtown Billings safer for pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers alike.	A safe pedestrian, cyclists, and car friendly downtown. Enhanced multi-modal options for residents and visitors.

STRATEGY

27th Street / State Route 3

Aligned Closest with the Goal: A Vibrant and Connected 24-Hour Downtown

North 27th Street is the transportation spine that connects the airport and Interstate 90 through downtown Billings. While many consider the northern boundary of what is “downtown” to be 4th Avenue North, visitors may perceive they are entering the downtown business district when passing Montana State University’s Billings campus, Dehler Park, or the healthcare cluster of St. Vincent and Billings Clinic. Perceiving downtown as larger and stretching north to these anchor institutions offers an opportunity to expand the economic footprint of downtown by attracting new customers and partnerships.

In order to realize this potential, it is critical to create a physical link that encourages pedestrian and bicycle activity, which has the added benefit of relieving parking and vehicular traffic stresses.

From a functional standpoint, sidewalks along 27th Street are narrow and do not have a buffer between pedestrians and travel lanes, yielding an unpleasant walking environment and a potentially dangerous situation for pedestrians. Because of the width of the road between 4th Avenue and 9th Avenue and a lack of a median with a pedestrian refuge, crossing 27th can be intimidating to all pedestrians and dangerous for older and disabled citizens who may require more time to cross such a street.

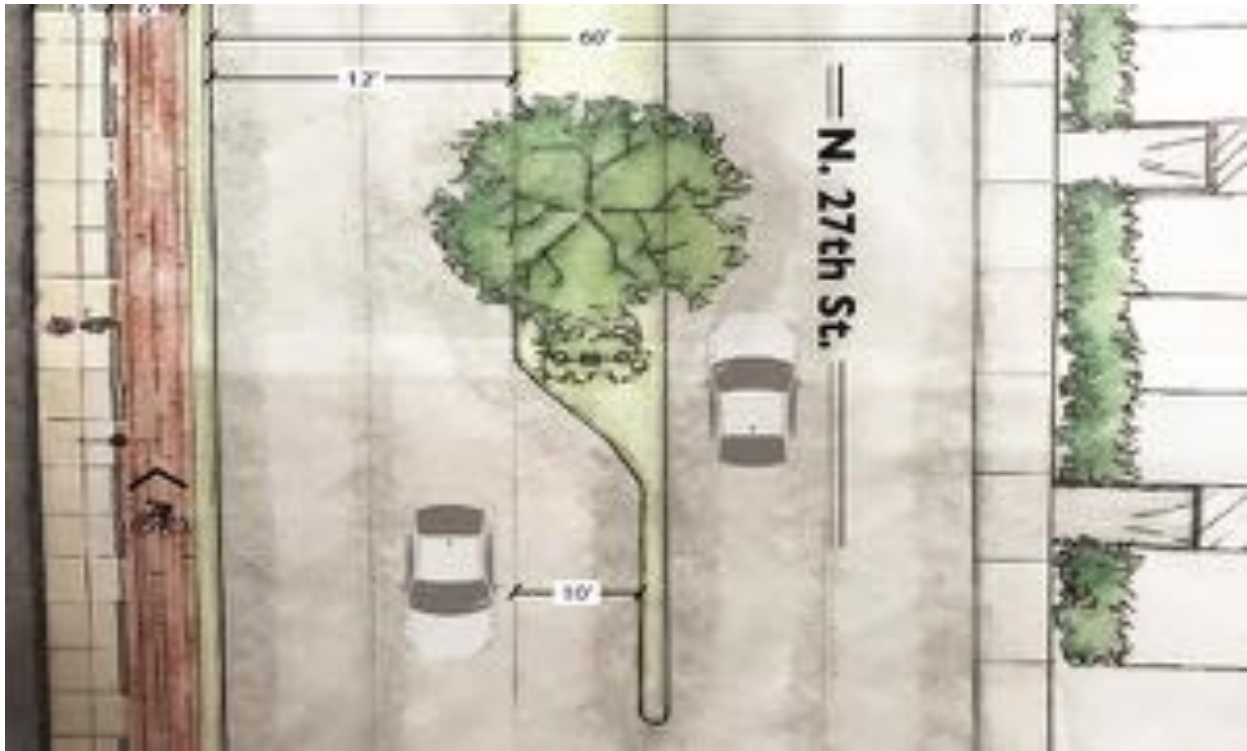
There are no facilities or accommodations designed for cyclists along the corridor. “Sharrows”^{7,8} markings are not present, nor are signs advising motorists to share the road with bicycles. This lack of facilities coupled with the speed of traffic leads cyclists to use the sidewalk in conflict with pedestrians. Given the width of the sidewalk, increased bicycle traffic could lead to pedestrians or cyclists accidentally moving into the roadway to avoid a collision. These conditions are made worse during times of snow, when road plows pile the snow onto sidewalks. Staff from the BID Street Team provide some snow removal services, but due to limited space to pile the snow, pedestrian paths are narrow and not suitable for both walkers and cyclists to share. North of the BID boundary, few owners clear the sidewalks, making walking an undesirable alternative form of transportation.

In addition to the functional link of enhanced bicycle and pedestrian facilities, the aesthetics of this corridor create the “first impressions” of Billings of visitors to the city and downtown in particular. Businesses along the corridor north of 4th Avenue include gas stations, hotels, restaurants, a supermarket, and various other retailers and service centers. While some exhibit the traditional suburban surface parking in front, many are actually located with smaller setbacks from the road. Landscaping is inconsistent and non-existent in some cases.

⁷ “Shared Lane Markings (SLMs), or “sharrows,” are road markings used to indicate a shared lane environment for bicycles and automobiles.”

⁸ National Association of City Transportation Officials, “Urban Bikeway Design Guide” <https://nacto.org/publication/urban-bikeway-design-guide/bikeway-signing-marking/shared-lane-markings/>, (accessed December 8, 2017).

DOWNTOWN BILLINGS ALLIANCE STRATEGIC PLAN

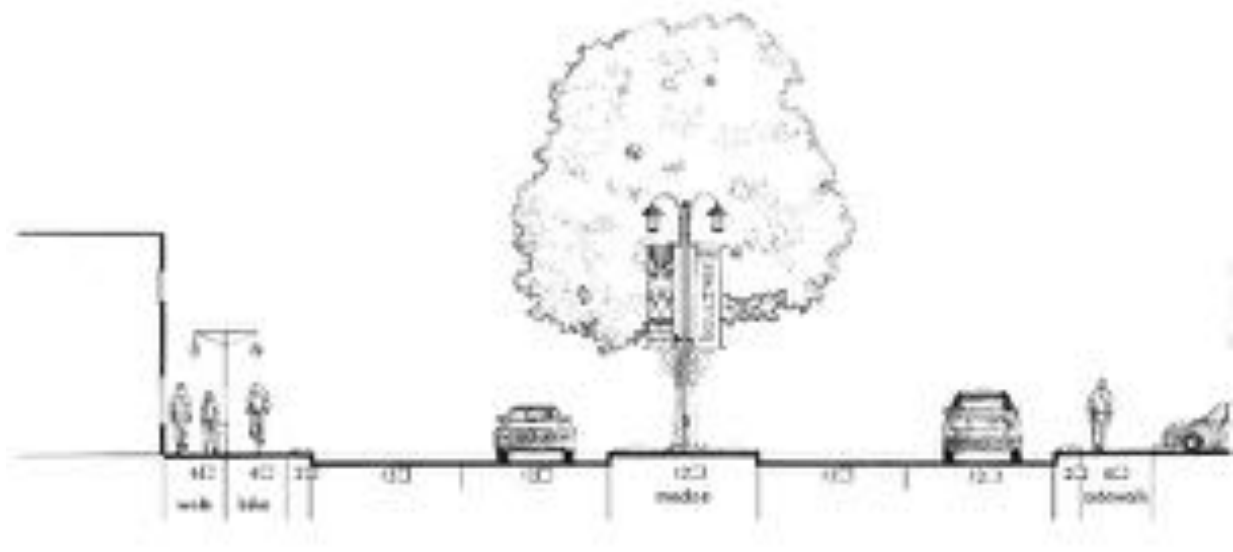


N. 27th St. – Downtown Billings. Conceptual Rendering. Max Hammer, 2017

With the landmark institutions and community assets located along the 27th Street corridor, this economic and cultural spine has the potential to become an aesthetically pleasing and multi-modal gateway into the community and downtown. A corridor study from 6th Avenue South to 9th Avenue North could provide a blueprint for multi-modal functionality, aesthetic improvement, and address issues such as enhanced pedestrian safety and snow removal. The corridor plan should consider:

- Potential road diet to reduce the number of travel lanes in some areas;
- Widening sidewalks and adding a buffer;
- Adding bicycle facilities (a sidewalk-grade trail or buffered bike lanes);
- Installation of a central landscaped median to accommodate plowed snow and provide a pedestrian refuge;
- And, wayfinding signage.

DOWNTOWN BILLINGS ALLIANCE
STRATEGIC PLAN



N. 27th St.

N. 27th St. – Downtown Billings. Conceptual Perspective. Max Hammer, 2017

As this is a state route, it is critical to engage the local and state MDT representatives in this conversation and assure the resulting recommendations are incorporated into department's plans and budgets.

ACTION ITEM #1:

Commission a corridor study to address safety, functionality, and aesthetics of the 27th Street corridor entering and through downtown Billings.

ACTION MATRIX:

27th Street / State Route 3

ACTION ITEM #1:

Commission a 27th St. Study

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:

Six (6) Months – One (1) Year

Responsible Department(s):	Responsible Board(s):	Responsible Partners(s):	Potential Funding Source(s):	Alignment w/ Prior Plan(s):	Performance Measure(s):	Benefit(s):
President & CEO; Economic Development Director; Director of Operations	DBA; BID; DBP	City; County; MDT	BID; City; County; MDT; US DOT; Grants; Crowd-funding	Framework; Urban Renewal Plans for N. 27 TIF	Completion of a study that will infuse objective data with strategies to make 27th St. safer for pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers alike.	A safe pedestrian, cyclists, and car friendly 27 th St. Enhanced multi-modal options for residents and visitors.

STRATEGY

Aesthetics and Cultural Enhancements to Walkability

Aligned Closest with the Goal: A Vibrant and Connected 24-Hour Downtown

Some of the resistance to walking from a parking facility to a destination in the downtown area can be overcome if the walk itself offers the visitor a pleasant, unique, fun, or informative experience. In paying close attention to what people see and experience between public parking locations and key downtown attractions, a variety of improvements can be managed to enhance the walking experience. The most common problem areas include surface parking lots, vacant buildings, empty lots, and sidewalks in a condition of disrepair.

Repairing and replacing damaged or substandard sidewalks are simple fixes and require prioritization and budgeting on the part of the responsible party. Other enhancements must be undertaken by property owners or organizations like those comprising the Alliance. Landscaped screening of surface parking and vacant lots is somewhat effective, but the simple addition of public art, creative lighting, and parklets^{9, 10} can boost the effectiveness of getting people to walk past these potential eyesores. Adding cultural references and historic images and factoids to pavement, street furniture, and street standards can also add interest for pedestrians in areas where a diversion is desired.

Creative painting of crosswalks and intersections can have dual benefits of adding to the visual appeal of downtown while also improving safety by alerting drivers to areas with heavier pedestrian traffic.



N. 27th St. – Downtown Billings. Conceptual Perspective. Max Hammer, 2017

ACTION ITEM #1:

Inventory the walking experience between public parking facilities and popular downtown destinations, noting needed sidewalk repairs/replacements, potential opportunities for landscaping and public art installation, areas for improved lighting, historic and cultural significance, and opportunities to improve visibility of pedestrians.

⁹ “Parklets are public seating platforms that convert curbside parking spaces into vibrant community spaces.”

¹⁰ National Association of City Transportation Officials, “Urban Bikeway Design Guide”

ACTION MATRIX:

Aesthetics and Cultural Enhancements to Walkability

ACTION ITEM #1:

Pedestrian Experience Audit

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:

One (1) Year – Three (3) Years

Responsible Department(s):	Responsible Board(s):	Responsible Partners(s):	Potential Funding Source(s):	Alignment w/ Prior Plan(s):	Performance Measure(s):	Benefit(s):
President & CEO; Economic Development Director; Director of Operations	DBA; BID; DBP	City; County; MDT	BID; City; County; MDT; US DOT; Grants; Crowd-funding	2-Way St. Feasibility Study; Framework; FY 15-19 City Council; 2016 City of Billings Growth Policy; Urban Renewal Plans for N. 27 TIF; Exposition Gateway	Pedestrian Experience Audit that will align opportunities for parking-to-destination improvements including sidewalk repairs, public art, culture, lighting, and safety.	A safe and interesting downtown pedestrian experience. Enhanced multi-modal options for residents and visitors. Enhanced place-making.

STRATEGY

Two-Way vs One-Way Streets

Aligned Closest with the Goal: A Vibrant and Connected 24-Hour Downtown

While the planned traffic and bicycle study will likely address the issue of one-way streets on the flow of traffic, the impact on the downtown economy is so significant that it warrants a discussion.

Downtown streets are usually converted from traditional two-way traffic to one-way pairs in order to move vehicular traffic through downtown districts in the fastest, most efficient way possible for motorists. This approach has little regard for impacts on pedestrian safety or the prosperity of downtown businesses. However, research shows that two-way streets may actually be more efficient than previously thought. According to research conducted by Vikash Gayah and Carlos Daganzo¹¹, two-way street networks provide lower vehicle-moving capacities but can serve trips at a higher rate, which they argue is a better metric for predicting the efficiency of the street network during peak periods of traffic flow. This can be seen in Figure 1 below. They explain that two-way street networks are more efficient because the additional circuitry required in one-way networks do not compete with the more efficient intersection control found in two-way networks. Also, two-way street networks are more efficient as the signal cycles increase. When left turns are prohibited, two-way street networks serve trips at a higher rate.¹²

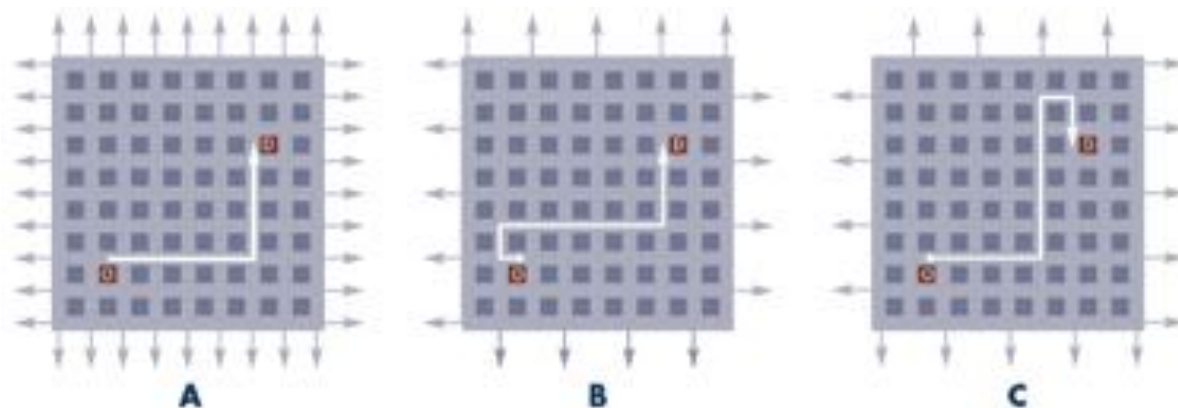


Figure 1: Street Networks¹³:

Routes taken between the same origin-destination pair in: (A) two-way street network, (B) one-way street network with deviation at origin, and (C) one-way street network with deviation at destination. As seen, (A) two-way street network is the most efficient path between two locations.

One of downtown Billings' most popular destination streets is Broadway, where a pedestrian-friendly environment featuring two-way traffic, enhanced sidewalk spaces, and a narrower street has attracted new and vibrant businesses. Replicating this success on other downtown streets by leveraging their unique character should produce similar results.

¹¹ Carlos Daganzo and Vikash Gayah, "Analytical Capacity Comparison of One-Way and Two-Way Signalized Street Networks" *Transportation Research Record: Journal of the Transportation Research Board*, Volume 2301, 2012, Pages 76-85, accessed from Vikash Gayah, "Two-Way Street Networks: More Efficient than Previously Thought?" *ACCESS Magazine*, The Regents of the University of California, 2012, <https://www.accessmagazine.org/fall-2012/two-way-street-networks-efficient-previously-thought/>, (accessed December 8, 2017).

¹² Daganzo and Gayah, "Analytical Capacity Comparison of One-Way and Two-Way Signalized Street Networks"

¹³ Ibid

DOWNTOWN BILLINGS ALLIANCE

STRATEGIC PLAN

One example is the nightlife and dining destination of Montana Avenue. Calming traffic, enhancing pedestrian facilities, and making crosswalks more visible could attract new businesses, fill vacancies, and increase revenues as more visitors are attracted to this district and encouraged to spend more time and money. Broadway's success and Montana Avenue's potential should serve as models for business and property owners on other streets to innovate their own sub-district identities and prosperity.

ACTION ITEM #1:

Promote the economic and safety impacts of two-way streets, lobby for conversion of one-way streets in the core to two-way traffic and encourage one-way pairs to be used only on the perimeter of the core area.

ACTION MATRIX:

Two-Way vs One-Way Streets

ACTION ITEM #1:

Demonstrate the Benefits and Lobby for Two-Way Streets

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:

One (1) Year – Three (3) Years

Responsible Department(s):	Responsible Board(s):	Responsible Partners(s):	Potential Funding Source(s):	Alignment w/ Prior Plan(s):	Performance Measure(s):	Benefit(s):
President & CEO; Economic Development Director; Director of Operations	DBA; BID; DBP	City; County; MDT	BID; City; County; MDT; US DOT; Grants; Crowd-funding	2-Way St. Feasibility Study; Urban Renewal Plans for N. 27 TIF	Conversion of one-way streets to two-way streets as studies and design guidelines allow.	A more efficient and safer traffic flow downtown.

STRATEGY

Parking Enhancements

Aligned Closest with the Goal: A Vibrant and Connected 24-Hour Downtown

America's love affair with the automobile has manifested itself in almost every aspect of urban design from highways, to drive-thru restaurants, dry cleaners, banks, and other amenities. The problem for downtown is that, with the exception of a few bank and ATM drive-thrus, no financial transactions take place from inside a vehicle. This necessitates vehicle storage while shopping, dining, entertainment, and professional service transactions take place.

In suburban shopping centers and office parks, large asphalt parking lots surround centers of commerce, bringing with them environmental, drainage and maintenance issues, as well as the aesthetic impact of blacktop and parked cars. The vertical, compact nature and high concentration of a variety of businesses and attractions downtown mean that such a vehicle storage solution is not possible here. Another challenge downtown faces that suburban-style development does not face is the fact that while garage or on-street parking options may actually be closer to the visitor's destination, the front door may not always be visible from the parking space and may be perceived as being more distant than it actually is. Overcoming this perception can become an economic opportunity for other businesses to attract new customers as they walk from their parking space to their primary destination.

Improvements to making walks from parking to businesses are discussed in this strategy, but it is important to understand that the longer people are encouraged to linger in the district, the more money they are likely to spend on impulse purchases and unexpected discoveries along their walk. This is a principle that developers of indoor shopping malls have long understood by positioning smaller stores with less name recognition between the anchor destinations and mall entrances from the parking lot.

Downtown parking issues generally result from the "three As": Affordability, Accessibility, and Availability. Affordability does not appear to be an issue within downtown Billings as rates were never cited as a problem during the course of the planning process. Availability can be a subjective matter with some visitors insisting on parking directly in front of their destination, however availability must be closely monitored as new businesses enter the market and long-term employee parking must be balanced with more convenient short-term visitor parking. Accessibility is sometimes a matter of perception and knowledge of downtown. A program to educate parkers about where parking is located, way-finding to guide them there, and dispelling myths about safety and complexities of structured parking can, over time have a significant impact on Billingsites and their comfort with parking in locations other than directly in front of their destination.

DOWNTOWN BILLINGS ALLIANCE
STRATEGIC PLAN

ACTION ITEM #1:

Develop and launch an educational campaign to change the perceptions of parking downtown and help visitors identify where to park, how to park cheaply or for free (validation/tokens), and parking smart (safety and security).

ACTION ITEM #2:

Contract with/select a parking app to help visitors to downtown identify available parking (with real-time space availability in garages) and plan their driving routes to the best garage and walking routes from the garage to their destinations.

ACTION ITEM #3:

Implement a way-finding system to direct drivers to public parking facilities. This system could include clean, simple, and easily recognizable (universal blue and white P) directional signage on traffic control devices as well as similar emblems affixed to the pavement of driving and turn lanes.

ACTION ITEM #4:

Delineate downtown employee parking on higher levels of garages and more remote spaces in surface lots to allow short-term visitors to park in the most convenient spaces.

ACTION MATRIX:

PARKING

ACTION ITEM #1:

Downtown Parking Educational Campaign

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:

Six (6) Months – One (1) Year

ACTION ITEM #2:

Provide a Parking App

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:

Six (6) Months – One (1) Year

ACTION ITEM #3:

Install Parking Way-Finding

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:

One (1) Year – Three (3) Years

ACTION ITEM #3:

Relocate Downtown Employee Parkers to Higher-Parking Decks

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:

One (1) Year – Three (3) Years

Responsible Department(s):	Responsible Board(s):	Responsible Partners(s):	Potential Funding Source(s):	Alignment w/ Prior Plan(s):	Performance Measure(s):	Benefit(s):
President & CEO; Economic Development Director; Director of Operations	DBA; BID; DBP	City; County; MDT	BID; City; County; MDT; US DOT; Grants; Crowd-funding	2-Way St. Feasibility Study; Framework; FY 15-19 City Council; Urban Renewal Plans for N. 27 TIF; Exposition Gateway	Increased patrons to downtown businesses and events; parking app; installation of parking way-finding; relocated parking for day-time downtown employees.	Increased patrons to downtown businesses and events; safer and easier parking for visitors and commuters alike.

STRATEGY

Autonomous Vehicles

Aligned Closest with the Goal: A Vibrant and Connected 24-Hour Downtown

Autonomous vehicles (AV) will transform urban transportation and impact land use in the coming years and decades. Cities, and downtowns in particular, must plan, prepare, develop policies, and enhance infrastructure to accommodate these foreseeable changes. Downtown Billings and its transportation and planning partners at the City of Billings, Yellowstone County, and State of Montana must proactively conduct planning and implement necessary changes to stay ahead of this dynamic shift. The Aspen Institute has provided urban policy guidance for cities and downtowns to prepare for AV.¹⁴ The Institute advised that there are seven major considerations cities should prepare for to accommodate AV. These include road safety; mobility; sustainability; jobs and the economy; human services; public finance; and land use.¹⁵

The United States is at risk of losing decades of driving safety gains due to distracted driving, as driving related deaths rose by 10% in 2016. Experts believe that AV may be able to provide a solution to this trend from both an emergency response and accident prevention standpoint. Further, AV may become a preferred mode of mid-range and commuting transportation. However, cities will need to prepare to be accessible to AV.

A notable concern with AV is that they will be implemented at the cost of human jobs, as AV could greatly reduce the need for taxi and truck drivers. However, studies have identified sectors where AV could spur job growth including in the conversion of parking facilities, expansion of highways and roads, and IT products linked to the shift to AV. Additionally, businesses are likely to incur lower transportation costs, and innovative consumer products and services are likely to result from the implantation of AV.

Cities themselves are likely to benefit from AV, which could enable savings and innovation. Examples of how cities can innovate services include automating school buses and automating transport to healthcare. It is estimated that 11 million health care appointments are missed each year in the United States, which results in losses of \$19 billion annually. AV could greatly reduce these sunk costs. AV may have negative short term financial impacts to municipalities as they will eliminate or greatly reduce the need for services such as on street parking. In the short term, this lost revenue could be recouped through targeted taxes and fees, such as taxes and fees related to road use.

AV may also have positive effects on urban land use, as they would reduce the need for public parking lots located in the city core because AV can be parked in outlying lots. This would free prime land for more impactful development. There will certainly be an adjustment period as municipalities grapple with the influx of AV, but these vehicles should have positive impacts if properly leveraged.



Autonomous vehicle - Volvo

Credit: <https://www.volvocars.com/intl/about/our-innovation-brands/intellisafe/autonomous-driving#>

¹⁴ Alison Decker, "Seven Ways Cities Should Prepare for Autonomous Vehicles" *The Aspen Institute*, <https://www.aspeninstitute.org/blog-posts/7-areas-urban-policy-will-affected-autonomous-vehicles/>, (accessed December 8, 2017)

¹⁵ Decker, "Seven Ways Cities Should Prepare for Autonomous Vehicles"

DOWNTOWN BILLINGS ALLIANCE
STRATEGIC PLAN

ACTION ITEM #1:

Commission planning on infrastructure and land use adaptation needed to accommodate AV.

ACTION ITEM #2:

Commission planning that anticipates how downtown Billings will adjust to lost funding associated with AV (e.g. lost revenue from significantly decreased demand for on street parking).

ACTION ITEM #3:

Commission planning for how public parking lots located in the city core may be repurposed for more impactful development.

ACTION MATRIX:

Autonomous Vehicles (AV)

ACTION ITEM #1:

Commission an AV Infrastructure and Land Use Study

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:

One (1) Year – Three (3) Years

ACTION ITEM #2:

Commission AV Study on Revenue Impacts and Opportunities

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:

One (1) Year – Three (3) Years

ACTION ITEM #3:

Commission a Parking Adaptation or Reuse Study Regarding AV

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:

One (1) Year – Three (3) Years

Responsible Department(s):	Responsible Board(s):	Responsible Partners(s):	Potential Funding Source(s):	Alignment w/ Prior Plan(s):	Performance Measure(s):	Benefit(s):
President & CEO; Economic Development Director; Director of Operations	DBA; BID; DBP	City; County; MDT	BID; City; County; MDT; US DOT; Grants; Crowd-funding	FY 15-19 City Council; 2016 City of Billings Growth Policy	Commissioned studies on the impacts and opportunities of AV in downtown.	Prepare downtown Billings' infrastructure, finances, and land use for the changes coming with AV.

STRATEGY

Downtown Shuttle

Aligned Closest with the Goal: A Vibrant and Connected 24-Hour Downtown

The Downtown Billings Alliance will reassess the feasibility of a public downtown shuttle that will make downtown more accessible to all residents. If the shuttle proves feasible in terms of ridership and costs, the Alliance should work with regional transportation partners to implement a downtown shuttle service running to and from downtown Billings and other areas of the city.



*COTA's CBUS® Circulator - Central Ohio Transit Authority
Credit: <https://www.cota.com/how-to-ride/airconnect/>*

A large portion of downtown Billings' stakeholders engaged through focus groups, interviews, and the community forum expressed a desire to have more public transportation downtown. This was especially true during the community forum, as one of the most popular ideas is to develop a light rail or trolley system downtown. Due to price constraints and population density, these types of transportation are likely not feasible for downtown Billings. However, there are other modes of public transportation that could be implemented realistically such as a public shuttle.

A downtown shuttle could travel between various pick up points downtown and other pick up points throughout the city including the campuses of MSUB, Rocky Mountain College, and at the Health & Wellness District¹⁶. Another important pick up point is the Billings Logan International Airport (BIL). BIL has one of the best proximities to a central business district than any other city in the country – providing downtown Billings an amazing asset and business case for investment. Even with the proximity, the downtown shuttle's service to BIL is important. Service to these pick up points, and others, would help residents and visitors get downtown safely and efficiently and would eliminate passengers' need for parking, thus reserving valuable sites for infill development.

Additionally, downtown would become more accessible to residents. This will aid downtown businesses as an increase in people downtown should lead to more commerce for these businesses. It is first recommended that the Downtown Billings Alliance engage in an update of the Billings Downtown Circulator Study, which was completed in 2012. The study describes the appropriate circulator or shuttle service for downtown. This study should be reevaluated to ensure the findings are still accurate and that the service would be beneficial, well used, and affordable, or possibly more popular now. The Alliance should engage the City of Billings and other partners to assist with funding for the study and costs for operating the shuttle, if feasible, as a shuttle program would be available to all city residents.

¹⁶ Landmark Development, "ONE Big Sky Center, Concept Development Plan"

DOWNTOWN BILLINGS ALLIANCE
STRATEGIC PLAN

ACTION ITEM #1:

Commission a feasibility study that analyzes the cost effectiveness and expected ridership of a downtown shuttle service.

ACTION ITEM #2:

Lease or purchase a shuttle if this strategy proves feasible, and if Downtown Billings Alliance decides to proceed with this service.

ACTION ITEM #3:

Hire the appropriate number of drivers for the shuttle service, depending on the hours that are reasonable for the shuttle to operate.

ACTION ITEM #4:

Develop formal policies regarding safety, where the shuttle stops will be located, ridership fees, and other necessary policies.

ACTION MATRIX:

Downtown Shuttle

ACTION ITEM #1:

Downtown Shuttle Feasibility Study

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:

One (1) Year – Three (3) Years

ACTION ITEM #2:

Shuttle Lease/Purchase

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:

One (1) Year – Three (3) Years

ACTION ITEM #3:

Hire Drivers

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:

One (1) Year – Three (3) Years

ACTION ITEM #4:

Develop Policies

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:

One (1) Year – Three (3) Years

Responsible Department(s):	Responsible Board(s):	Responsible Partners(s):	Potential Funding Source(s):	Alignment w/ Prior Plan(s):	Performance Measure(s):	Benefit(s):
President & CEO; Economic Development Director; Director of Operations	BID; DBP	City; County; MDT	BID; City; County; MDT; US DOT; Grants; Crowd-funding	Billings Downtown Circulator Study; FY 15-19 City Council; 2016 City of Billings Growth Policy: Urban Renewal Plans for N. 27 TIF	Completion of the feasibility study.	Safe, accessible, efficient, and customer-oriented transportation bringing residents and visitors downtown.

STRATEGY

Amtrak Empire Builder Bypass

Aligned Closest with the Goal: A Vibrant and Connected 24-Hour Downtown

Billings was founded in 1882 by the Northern Pacific Railroad and named after the railroad's President, Frederick Billings. It served as a rail hub, which was responsible for the city's major growth.¹⁷ The early



President Teddy Roosevelt speaks to a crowd at the Union Railroad Depot, April 1911. Credit: <http://www.montanaavenue.com/history/>

decades of the city's development saw abundant passenger rail service. In 1931 more than twenty-six passenger trains served the Billings Depot daily.¹⁸ The city's deep connection to the railroad can be seen today as a major working rail line operates between Montana Avenue and Minnesota Avenue and is bisected by 27th Street going northwest to southeast. Further, these roots are evident at the historic Billings Depot,¹⁹ which offers a first-class event venue that celebrates the building and city's railroad past. Though the history is apparent, passenger rail service no longer exists as a multi-modal asset.

The significant railroad infrastructure in Billings and through the Northern Rockies and Plain States presents an opportunity to assert that Billings is a multi-state regional economic, cultural, and social center. In holistically developing a strategy for downtown Billings to realize the vision of being a multi-modal center, long-distance and even future regional rail service must be explored. This alternative mode of transportation presents a third opportunity for residents of the Billings region to travel afar when automotive or air service is not an option or preferred.

Existing Amtrak rail service exists in Montana through the Empire Builder line, which runs direct service from Seattle, Washington and Portland, Oregon to Chicago, Illinois.²⁰ Though the Empire Builder serves Montana, the line only passes through the most northern portions of the state parallel to the Canadian border. Thus, it excludes Montana's major cities and regions such as Missoula, Butte, Helena, Great Falls, Bozeman, Billings, Miles City, and others. Further, the line excludes several significant cities in North Dakota including Dickinson and Bismarck. Additionally, there are numerous American Indian reservations that are unserved in this corridor. An existing rail line currently connects these regions from Fargo, North Dakota all the way past the Flathead Reservation in northwestern Montana and connects directly to the Empire Builder line in Sandpoint, Idaho. The tracks are down; the only thing that is missing is the actual rail service.

¹⁷ Robin W. Winks, "Billings, Frederick" *American National Biography*, <http://www.anb.org/view/10.1093/anb/9780198606697.001.0001/anb-9780198606697-e-1000137;jsessionid=14927598BD19AECCF23316B4B6047CA9>, (accessed December 8, 2017); Montana Avenue. Fun in the Heart of Downtown Billings, Montana, "History" <http://www.montanaavenue.com/history/>, (accessed December 8, 2017).

¹⁸ Billings Depot, "History of the Depot" <https://www.billingsdepot.org/history-depot/>, (accessed December 9, 2017).

¹⁹ <https://www.billingsdepot.org/>

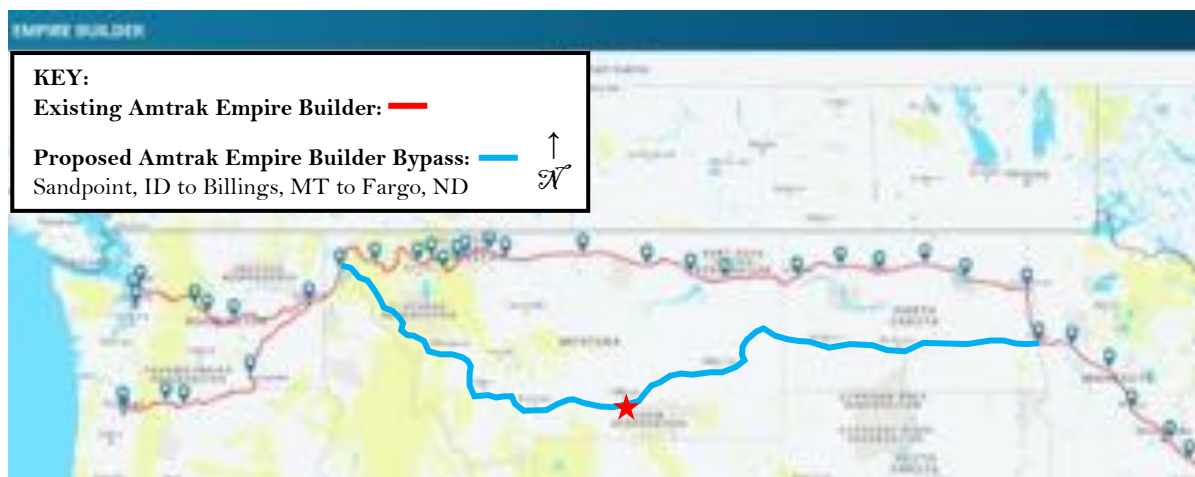
²⁰ Amtrak, "Empire Building: Map" <https://www.amtrak.com/routes/empire-builder-train.html>, (accessed December 8, 2017).

DOWNTOWN BILLINGS ALLIANCE STRATEGIC PLAN



An example of a modern rail station in Denver, Colorado²¹

Downtown Billings Alliance and numerous regional partners such as Big Sky Economic Development; the Billings Chamber of Commerce; the City of Billings; Yellowstone County; Montana Public Service Commission; Montana Rail Link; Amtrak²²; political leadership at the local, regional, state, and federal levels; and others have an opportunity to lead a multi-state regional initiative to study, plan, and advocate for the development of passenger rail service serving as an alternate route connecting to the existing Empire Builder line. This would be called the Amtrak Empire Builder Bypass. These regional partners should form the Billings Empire Builder Bypass Committee to initiate planning efforts.



²¹ Center for Transit-Oriented Development, Reconnecting America, and Jeff Wood, "Station Area Planning" *TOD 202*, <http://www.tod.org/stations.html>, (accessed December 9, 2017)

²² Amtrak Government Affairs Contact: Northwest Rob Eaton, Senior Manager. 187 S. Holgate Street, Seattle, WA 98134
governmentaffairssea@amtrak.com

DOWNTOWN BILLINGS ALLIANCE

STRATEGIC PLAN

The Billings Empire Builder Bypass Committee should engage regional leadership from Sandpoint, Missoula, Butte, Helena and Great Falls (these two cities would have a north-south connection from the existing line to the bypass), Bozeman, Miles City, Dickinson, Bismarck, Fargo, and American Indian reservations within proximity to the Empire Builder Bypass corridor regarding the opportunity. The Committee would connect with these regions to gauge interest, pool political and financial resources, and to commission a feasibility study that would include all mentioned regions. Activation of the Empire Builder Bypass will require significant financial, stakeholder, and political capital as well as patience. Yet, the investments may significantly enhance the strengths of this corridor and support connectivity and investment – such as transit oriented development^{23,24} – in its regions, cities, reservations, and communities.

ACTION ITEM #1:

Form the Billings Empire Builder Bypass Committee to develop initial regional capacity, gauge regional interest, and conduct initial planning.

ACTION ITEM #2:

Engage regional leadership from Sandpoint, Missoula, Butte, Helena, Great Falls, Bozeman, Miles City, Dickinson, Bismarck, Fargo, and American Indian reservations within proximity to the Empire Builder Bypass corridor to organize a multi-regional Empire Builder Bypass Consortium to pool political, knowledge, and financial resources.

ACTION ITEM #3:

Commission an Empire Builder Bypass feasibility study to determine the fiscal, business, and political viability of the opportunity.

²³ “Transit Oriented Development...also known as TOD,... is the creation of compact, walkable, pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use communities centered around high quality train systems.”

²⁴ Transit Oriented Development Institute, “Transit Oriented Development” <http://www.tod.org/>, (accessed December 9, 2017).

ACTION MATRIX:

Amtrak Empire Builder Bypass

ACTION ITEM #1:

Form the Billings Empire Builder Bypass Committee

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:

One (1) Year – Three (3) Years

ACTION ITEM #2:

Engage Regional Leaders in MT and ND that may Benefit from the Empire Builder Bypass and Form the Multi-Regional Empire Builder Bypass Consortium

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:

One (1) Year – Three (3) Years

ACTION ITEM #3:

Commission an Empire Builder Bypass Feasibility Study

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:

One (1) Year – Three (3) Years

Responsible Department(s):	Responsible Board(s):	Responsible Partners(s):	Potential Funding Source(s):	Alignment w/ Prior Plan(s):	Performance Measure(s):	Benefit(s):
President & CEO; Economic Development Director; Director of Operations	DBA; BID; DBP	City; County; MDT; Montana Public Service Commission; Montana Rail Link; Amtrak; other political leaders	BID; City; County; MDT; US DOT; Grants; Crowd-funding	N/A	Formation of the Billings Empire Building Bypass Committee and the Multi-Regional Consortium. Completion of the feasibility study.	Enhanced long-distance multi-modal options for residents and visitors. Enhanced place-making and economic opportunities through TOD.

STRATEGY

Free Public Wi-Fi

Aligned Closest with the Goal: A Vibrant and Connected 24-Hour Downtown

The expansion and expectation of contemporary digital connectivity relates to the transit-related recommendations of this multi-modal transformative initiative. The ability to digitally communicate is a necessity in transportation but also in the spirit of connectivity. Business, education, culture, entertainment, and social interactions require internet and related telecommunications to operate safely, efficiently, and in the modern world.

Businesses – particularly entrepreneurs, residents, organizations, individuals, and government all have increased their demand for free public Wi-Fi. Entrepreneurs find public Wi-Fi as a public business asset that lowers cost and enhances engagement. Citizens prefer this service to stream data to their mobile devices. Cities can utilize public Wi-Fi platforms to enable smart technologies including traffic control, power grid communications, and smart meter reading.

Cities throughout the world are experimenting with implementing these Wi-Fi solutions with mixed results. Public Wi-Fi often has positive effects for users as it improves connectivity and cuts down on costs associated with mobile phone usage. However, a shortcoming related to these public Wi-Fi networks is that they do not provide geographically comprehensive coverage, and may not be capable of dealing with expected increases in user traffic.

Free public Wi-Fi may look different in the future to address shortcomings. One solution is for cities to leverage existing assets such as existing private Wi-Fi networks. This system would work by allowing businesses, residences, and community members alike to subscribe to the service. Businesses and residences could provide their own personal Wi-Fi sources to the larger network, and citizens could subscribe to use the service.

Some commercial Internet Service providers are already offering similar services where they allow customers who purchase home networks to utilize community Wi-Fi networks created by splitting off unused private Wi-Fi. This model could be replicated by municipalities and incentivize participants to allow their Wi-Fi networks to be used. It should be noted that this system would need to ensure that those using the provided Wi-Fi do not take too much bandwidth from providers, as this would have a negative impact on those making small portions of their Wi-Fi publicly available. An analogy that conceptualizes how any form of free public Wi-Fi can work effectively is that user traffic will need to be properly monitored and controlled just like traffic on public roads.

ACTION ITEM #1:

Research best practices for developing public Wi-Fi networks and identify the best method of providing free public Wi-Fi service for downtown Billings.

ACTION MATRIX:

Free Public Wi-Fi

ACTION ITEM #1:

Research Best Practices for Developing Free Public Wi-Fi Networks

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:

One (1) Year – Three (3) Years

Responsible Department(s):	Responsible Board(s):	Responsible Partners(s):	Potential Funding Source(s):	Alignment w/ Prior Plan(s):	Performance Measure(s):	Benefit(s):
President & CEO; Economic Development Director	DBA; BID, DBP	City, County, MDT; Big Sky Economic Development; Private Provider(s)	Private Provider(s); BID, City, County, Grants, Crowd-funding	FY 15-19 City Council	Initial planning for free public Wi-Fi offering.	Free public Wi-Fi will enhance communications and have an indirect benefit of downtown Billings being seen as friendly to entrepreneurs.

MIXED-USE MULTI-ANCHOR DEVELOPMENT

Downtown Billings, the Billings MSA, and the State of Montana have the opportunity to implement a grand vision of game-changing development in downtown Billings. Large-scale mixed-use multi-anchor development opportunities (Mixed-use Anchor Strategies), such as ONE Big Sky Center, represent a truly transformative initiative that permeates beyond downtown and holds the potential for expansive prosperity. These concepts have evolved from a single building or consolidated set of structures to a vision that still accommodates a centerpiece development – such as the convention center, but that is grander than a single project.

Significance of this Initiative

Mixed-use Anchor Strategies hold the promise of realizing the Opportunity Statement at the beginning of the strategic plan – to see downtown Billings become the economic, cultural, and social center of the Northern Rockies and Plains States.



Credit: CTA Architects; Landmark Development (2017). "ONE Big Sky Center, Concept Development" Plan"

Background

Landmark, in concert with the Hammes Company, has created a Concept Development Plan²⁵ that proposes a vision for ONE Big Sky Center that is positioned as an economic development strategy. The Mixed-use Anchor Strategy transformative initiative in the strategic plan does not simply rephrase the Landmark / Hammes ONE Big Sky Center Concept Development Plan. Rather, it acknowledges the opportunities with that specific plan and directs Downtown Billings Alliance and partners on strategies to evolve the Landmark / Hammes vision and other concepts devoted to realizing an exemplary series of development projects for downtown Billings.

²⁵ Landmark Development (2017). "ONE Big Sky Center, Concept Development Plan"

DOWNTOWN BILLINGS ALLIANCE

STRATEGIC PLAN

The Landmark / Hammes definition for the ONE Big Sky Center is aligned with the downtown community's interest and desire for the overall initiative. It focuses on an approach of attacking the opportunity from different angles with diverse stakeholders involved. The community champions the broader vision as it broadens the economic opportunity, encourages infill development, may ultimately be self-supporting given the right legislatively enabled model, supports local and state government and services, increases visitation from within and outside the region, has built-in sustainability that spreads risk, and enhances vibrancy in the urban core. The Landmark / Hammes ONE Big Sky Center Concept Development Plan embodies these opportunities in their four (4) stated goals for the Plan²⁶ and are complementary to the broader initiative and strategic plan.

Goal #1: Create new jobs and an engaged and inspired workforce

- New jobs drive not only the local, but also the regional and statewide, economies, creating meaningful economic and fiscal impacts.
- It is critical for Billings's competitive status in the Mountain Region to attract and retain highly-skilled professionals, industry workforce and support staff.
- Health care is already the largest private employer in the City and is uniquely positioned to be a catalyst to create a workforce development plan that supports the entire region, not only in health care, but multiple industry segments.
- Support a range of housing options and more mixed-use development in the downtown core.
- Support the build out of programmatic elements that meet current and anticipated market demand and meet the needs of the next generation of workers (with uses including retail, housing, arts/entertainment, etc.).

Goal #2: Provide meaningful economic and fiscal impacts to the City, County and State

- Estimating the economic and fiscal impacts of Mixed-use Anchor Strategies such as ONE Big Sky Center will be critical to the efforts to secure the required public and private investment.
- In particular, new construction and permanent jobs (direct, indirect and induced) from these projects mean increased tax base at all levels of government and will be a strong selling point for State and local elected officials.
- This increased tax base and more robust regional economy have a compounding effect – attracting more private investment, which makes public investment in the ONE Big Sky Center vision – and others – an easy decision for Montana elected officials.
- With shared public-private investment, opportunities like the ONE Big Sky Center can become reality, allowing other Billings and regional businesses to benefit, and the entire State economy will be impacted, leveraging private spending and realizing an impressive rate of return to the public sector.
- Build a comprehensive plan to grow tax base for the City, the County, and the State.
- Realize a return on public investment at a significant ratio.

²⁶ Ibid

DOWNTOWN BILLINGS ALLIANCE
STRATEGIC PLAN

Goal #3: Increase Visitation for the City, Region and State

- Create a public-private partnership to achieve significant increases in year-round visitation, with facilities and programming that support tourism on a 365 day-a-year basis.
- Build a plan with the public sector and other private partners that will:
- Increase visitation that has stagnated at about approximately 2 million visitors per year
- Increase average total visitation dollars spent
- Increase average stays
- Ensure reinvestment of tourism spending back into the economy to support future growth
- Establish Billings as one of the Mountain Region's dominant destination cities for meetings, conventions, and related activities by building and investing in Montana's only true regional convention facility.

Goal #4: Create a "Lifestyle" City Centered on Health / Wellness / Recreation

- The re-urbanization of America is changing our economy and increasing competition between regions to attract the businesses, jobs, and workers that will increase "prosperity" and create other social and economic advantages. Cities and communities that are focused on implementing programs and services to improve individual and population health and productivity, to make their community a more desirable place to live and work, and to reduce the cost of doing business are laying the groundwork for transformation, and redefining what it means to be smarter.
- Create a development strategy that capitalizes on planning and design trends toward re-urbanization and more healthy built and natural environments, which the City of Billings can uniquely offer.
- Create an inviting and connected public realm with opportunities such as ONE Big Sky Center at its core.
- Develop a series of memorable urban experiences and programmatic offerings that appeal to all of Billings's residents and visitors.
- Overall, the objective of "wellness" has replaced merely treating the sick. Cities across America are looking for innovative ways to drive their economies with a focus and concentrated effort toward wellness as a theme for their communities.
- Healthier populations in "well economies" reduce rising and unsustainable health care costs, allowing public entities to allocate more resources to infrastructure, education, and community programs and allowing health care providers to invest more in health and wellness strategies.
- Wellness-centered and eco-tourism industries are burgeoning, and Billings's unique natural beauty and location, along with a strategic downtown development plan, will provide a means to capitalize on a wellness economy grounded in both the built and natural environments.

DOWNTOWN BILLINGS ALLIANCE STRATEGIC PLAN

Core Components to the Landmark / Hammes ONE Big Sky Center Plan – Consistent with the Broader Components of a Mixed-use Anchor Strategy

At its core, there are four main components of the Landmark / Hammes ONE Big Sky Center Concept Development Plan that align with strategic recommendations in the Mixed-use Anchor Strategy transformative initiative.²⁷:

- **Economic Development Strategy vs. a Single Project**
 - Anchor Institution Strategy – District Development Plan
 - Health & Wellness District
 - Anchors: Billings Clinic, St. Vincent Hospital, and other Healthcare in Vicinity
 - Health Care / Other Commercial Development
 - Urban Residential Offerings
 - Dynamic, Year-Round Public Spaces & Mixed Uses
 - Bio-tech / Academic Collaboration Space
 - Lifestyle District
 - Anchor: State-of-the-Art Entertainment, Convention, Conference Center and Meeting Space
 - Upscale Full Service or Limited Service Hotel
 - Residential Offerings
 - Urban Retail & Entertainment
 - Unique Dining
 - Connected Office
 - Additional Civic Amenities and Public Connections
- **Deliberate Community Involvement and Buy-In**
- **Public-Private Partnerships (P3)^{28,29} Investment**
 - Opportunities such as ONE Big Sky Center cannot be developed without some public infrastructure contribution – a purely private model is unrealistic
- **Multiple Developers/Investors**
 - It cannot be understated that the Landmark / Hammes ONE Big Sky Center Concept Development Plan presents a major opportunity for downtown.
 - Downtown Billings Alliance is committed to working with a multitude of public and private partners – potentially Landmark / Hammes and others - to ensure the Mixed-use Anchor Strategy initiative is realized.

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ “A public-private partnership (P3) is a contractual arrangement between a public agency (federal, state or local) and a private sector entity. Through this agreement, the skills and assets of each sector (public and private) are shared in delivering a service or facility for the use of the general public. In addition to the sharing of resources, each party shares in the risks and rewards potential in the delivery of the service and/or facility.”

²⁹ The National Council for Public-Private Partnerships, “Public-Private Partnerships Defined”, <https://www.ncppp.org/ppp-basics/7-keys/>, (accessed December 13, 2017)

DOWNTOWN BILLINGS ALLIANCE

STRATEGIC PLAN

Opportunities to Expand the Landmark / Hammes Concept Development Plan

There are opportunities that align the downtown community's feedback, research, strategic recommendations, and the goals in the strategic plan that expand upon the Landmark / Hammes ONE Big Sky Center Concept Development Plan to solidify a Mixed-use Anchor Strategy initiative. Downtown Billings Alliance, Big Sky Economic Development, Billings Chamber of Commerce, the City of Billings, and relevant partners will work with developers and investors to integrate the following important additions:

- The Mixed-use Anchor Strategy initiative will expand the ONE Big Sky Center proposed districts into the South Side and to the Yellowstone River.
- The ONE Big Sky Center centerpiece tower project could still be an opportunity.
- The initiative should include tactics to integrate existing retailers, convention/meeting venues, and hotels into the strategy versus solely focusing on the new competition. Competition is healthy and a logical part of the plan, but there needs to be a tactic to include existing businesses.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

On Monday, December 4 2017, Hammes presented the draft Landmark / Hammes ONE Big Sky Center Concept Development Plan to the City of Billings City Council at their monthly working session. There was genuine excitement and a willingness from Council, the community, and Hammes to continue to explore the development of the ONE Big Sky Center opportunity as part of a broader Mixed-use Anchor Strategy. Hammes presented their proposed next steps, many of which are complementary to the following strategies.

STRATEGY

Commission a Coordinated Effort to Align P3 and/or District Funding Models

Aligned Closest with the Goal: A Diverse Economic Engine

One or several district funding models, mixed with other economic development tools must be conceptualized, studied, developed, aligned, and prepared for implementation to take the next big step in the development of a Mixed-use Anchor Strategy. This is the most important, and potentially most challenging next step. Yet, the initiative will not occur with a purely private model.

ACTION ITEM #1:

Coordinate with public and private partners and developers, such as Landmark / Hammes, other developers, and regional stakeholders to develop specific next steps in the development of a district funding model.

ACTION ITEM #2:

Pool shared resources to commission professional services to design models and test with feasibility studies.

ACTION ITEM #3:

Further, this will require political capital to engage state and local legislators on legislation for the authorization of a new funding model.

ACTION MATRIX:

P3 and/or District Funding Models

ACTION ITEM #1:

Coordinate with Developers and Partners on Clearly Defined Next Steps

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:

Six (6) Months – One (1) Year

ACTION ITEM #2:

Commission Design of Funding Models and Feasibility Studies

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:

Six (6) Months – One (1) Year

ACTION ITEM #3:

Engage State and Local Legislators on the Importance of a Funding Model to Realize a Mixed-use Anchor Strategy

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:

Six (6) Months – One (1) Year

Responsible Department(s):	Responsible Board(s):	Responsible Partners(s):	Potential Funding Source(s):	Alignment w/ Prior Plan(s):	Performance Measure(s):	Benefit(s):
President & CEO; Economic Development Director	DBA; BID; DBP	Developers; City; County; Big Sky ED; MDT	New District Funding Model; BID; City; County; MDT; US DOT; Grants; Crowd-funding	Landmark / Hammes ONE Big Sky Center Concept Development Plan; FY 15-19 City Council	A developed and sustainable district funding model.	A district funding model will enable the implementation of the initiative and financing for development, such as ONE Big Sky Center, to occur.

DOWNTOWN BILLINGS ALLIANCE
STRATEGIC PLAN

STRATEGY

Integrate Strategic Enhancements Aligned with the Downtown Billings Alliance Strategic Plan: Dream Big, Downtown Billings

Aligned Closest with the Goal: A Diverse Economic Engine

As described above, there are several important alignments that need to be integrated into an updated Concept Development Plan for ONE Big Sky Center or any other series of development before executing the next steps in planning. These important additions reflect the community's desire to balance this exciting initiative with existing businesses and expand economic opportunity to neighboring communities and groups.

ACTION ITEM #1:

Expand the Mixed-use Anchor Strategy development boundaries into the South Side and to the Yellowstone River.

ACTION ITEM #2:

Though the Mixed-use Anchor Strategy initiative will be successful by implementing a mixed-use development pattern, Downtown Billings Alliance will still champion centerpiece projects such as the convention center and potentially the formerly proposed ONE Big Sky Center centerpiece tower, which may be called the ONE Big Sky Tower.

ACTION ITEM #3:

Integrate downtown's existing businesses into the Mixed-use Anchor Strategy to leverage their role as a stakeholder and ensure their economic opportunities are enhanced, not stifled amongst new development.

ACTION MATRIX:

Align with the Downtown Billings Alliance Strategic Plan

ACTION ITEM #1:

Expand the Mixed-use Anchor Strategy Development Boundaries into the South Side and to the Yellowstone River

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:

Six (6) Months – One (1) Year

ACTION ITEM #2:

Champion the Convention Center for Downtown Billings

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:

Six (6) Months – One (1) Year

ACTION ITEM #3:

Integrate Existing Businesses

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:

Six (6) Months – One (1) Year

Responsible Department(s):	Responsible Board(s):	Responsible Partners(s):	Potential Funding Source(s):	Alignment w/ Prior Plan(s):	Performance Measure(s):	Benefit(s):
President & CEO; Economic Development Director	DBA; BID; DBP	Developers; City; County; Big Sky ED; MDT	N/A	Downtown Billings Alliance Strategic Plan: Dream Big, Downtown Billings; FY 15-19 City Council; Landmark / Hammes ONE Big Sky Center Concept Development Plan	Development plans reflecting the synthesis.	Consistent Development Plan will reflect previous and simultaneous downtown planning efforts.

STRATEGY

Coordinate with Regional Partners, Developers – Landmark / Hammes and Others, and Investors to Launch a Preliminary Development Plan

Aligned Closest with the Goal: A Diverse Economic Engine

The completion of a Preliminary Development Plan will solidify the definition of the overall transformative initiative and construct a capital structure – in alignment with the development of the new district funding model.

ACTION ITEM #1:

Launch a formal, concerted, and diverse public outreach campaign.

ACTION ITEM #2:

Develop the program statement.

ACTION ITEM #3:

Commission the development of a Fiscal and Economic Impact Analysis.

ACTION ITEM #4:

Commission an Engineering and Transportation Assessment.

ACTION ITEM #5:

Commission a Land Use Analysis.

ACTION ITEM #6:

Commission a Market Research Analysis.

ACTION MATRIX:

Preliminary Development Plan

ACTION ITEM #1:
Public Outreach Plan

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:
Six (6) Months – One (1) Year

ACTION ITEM #2:
Program Statement

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:
Six (6) Months – One (1) Year

ACTION ITEM #3:
Fiscal & Economic Impact Analysis

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:
Six (6) Months – One (1) Year

ACTION ITEM #4:
Engineering & Transportation Assessment

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:
Six (6) Months – One (1) Year

ACTION ITEM #5:
Land Use Analysis

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:
Six (6) Months – One (1) Year

ACTION ITEM #6:
Market Research Analysis

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:
Six (6) Months – One (1) Year

Responsible Department(s):	Responsible Board(s):	Responsible Partners(s):	Potential Funding Source(s):	Alignment w/ Prior Plan(s):	Performance Measure(s):	Benefit(s):
President & CEO; Economic Development Director	DBA; BID; DBP	Developers; City; County; Big Sky ED; MDT	New District Funding Model; BID; City; County; MDT; US DOT; Grants; Crowd- funding	Landmark / Hammes ONE Big Sky Center Concept Develop- ment Plan; Downtown Billings Alliance Strategic Plan: Dream Big, Downtown Billings; FY 15- 19 City Council	Preliminary Development Plan.	A Preliminary Development Plan will reflect previous and simultaneous downtown planning efforts.



STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

The following strategic recommendations address the strategic plan goals, desired outcomes, and actions in relation to key areas covering Downtown Billings Alliance’s operations, programming, and partnership opportunities.

The Downtown Billings Alliance organizational structure is designed to manage the DBA, BID, and DBP under one consolidated staffing structure.

Delineate staff roles based on whether they are serving the mission of an individual entity or the Downton Billings Alliance holistically. Create Director-level positions for the DBP, BID, and DBA whose roles are to lead the execution of the strategic work plans of their specific entity. Each Director works under the leadership of the President and CEO. The President and CEO and Directors receive support from employees that provide professional service across the Alliance including operations, administrative assistance, financial record keeping, human resources, communications and social media, and grant writing.



Review operating budget, allocation among current Team and new hires, and identify opportunities to expand the Team and retain existing talent through salary adjustments.

COMMITTEES

Downtown Billings Alliance currently has eight committees that meet to provide authorization and approval on projects, expertise, and passionate guidance on the multi-faceted work that the Alliance conducts each day. Some of these committees meet frequently on a scheduled basis and some come together as needed. The following is a current list of committees, their responsibilities, and their meeting frequency:

- **Advocacy Committee**
 - Responsibilities: Leads advocacy efforts and interaction with local, state, and federal government and relevant stakeholders regarding matters that impact downtown.
 - Frequency: Currently as needed but expected to be monthly
- **Budget Subcommittee**
 - Responsibilities: Serves as a working group to develop and align priorities for Downtown Billings Alliance for the upcoming fiscal year (FY). Provides recommendations to Executive Committee and subsequently, all three Boards.
 - Frequency: Prior to the FY budget development
- **Development Committee**
 - Responsibilities: Reviews all incoming TIFD grant requests before sending them to the full Board and Billings City Council for approval. Guides downtown economic development priorities and strategy.
 - Frequency: Monthly
- **Downtown Billings Alliance Executive Committee**
 - Responsibilities: Aligns the recommendations from all three Boards and sets the agenda for the full Board of Directors' meetings.
 - Frequency: Monthly
- **Projects and Promotions Committee**
 - Responsibilities: Develops concepts and guides Downtown Billings Alliance marketing and event programming.
 - Frequency: Monthly
 - **Projects and Promotions Subcommittee: Pocket Parks^{30,31}**
 - Responsibilities: Leads the development of opportunities for Pocket Parks.
 - Frequency: As needed
 - **Projects and Promotions Subcommittee: Public Art**
 - Responsibilities: Explores opportunities to integrate public art into downtown infrastructure to enhance the vibrancy and authenticity of the urban core.
 - Frequency: As needed
- **Revolving Loan Committee**
 - Responsibility: Provides oversight on lending opportunities for entrepreneurs and small businesses. Advances the marketing of these assets to key economic development partners and business leaders.
 - Frequency: Monthly

³⁰ "Small parks, frequently less than three acres, inserted into interstitial spaces to provide an open space experience of respite from the city."

³¹ The Cultural Landscape Foundation, "Vest Pocket Park", <https://tclf.org/category/designed-landscape-types/public-park/vest-pocket-park>, (accessed December 12, 2017)

STRATEGY

Enhanced Committees

Aligned Closest with the Goal: A Sustainable Downtown Billings Alliance

There are structural changes to the existing committees that can be implemented to enhance efficiencies and effectiveness in implementing Downtown Billings Alliance's work and achieving the goals of the strategic plan. The following actions will be taken to realize enhancements to the committees.

ACTION ITEM #1:

Develop a single Alliance Finance Committee for financial oversight of all Downtown Billings Alliance entities. Ensure that the Finance Committee is informed on TIF, BID, and non-profit regulations and law.

The role of the Finance Committee is extensive, requiring a division of labor among members. Some of the responsibilities may include monthly review of the financial documents of all three Boards, development of compliance documents for Montana Code Annotated impacting TIF and BID, understanding of the legal restrictions of 501(c)3, 501(c)4, and 501(c)6 activities and expenditures, and finally taking an active role in the annual budgeting process across all organizations.

The development of the Alliance Finance Committee will require the integration of the Alliance Finance Committee into organizational by-laws, formalizing the role and recruiting dedicated Board volunteers from each organization to serve in this capacity. A process and expectations for the Alliance Finance Committee will need to be created to review monthly financial statements prior to Board approval. The Committee will be required to review and compile compliance and regulatory documents for distribution to all Boards. Further, the DBA, BID, and DBP will integrate the Alliance Finance Committee into the annual budgeting process.

ACTION ITEM #2:

Change the name of the Development Committee to the Economic Development Committee. This change is consistent with the change in title from Development Director to Economic Development Director. Further, this clarifies the economic development role of the DBP in downtown and asserts the importance a multi-faceted economic development effort.

ACTION ITEM #3:

Form a BID Committee to provide oversight on the fiscal and operational performance of the BID. The new committee will provide recommendations to the Executive Committee and subsequently the full BID Board. This will better represent the BID holistically and be consistent with the committee level responsibility found with the Economic Development Committee and DBA Committee seen below.

ACTION ITEM #4:

Adapt the Projects and Promotions Committee's name and scope to become the DBA Committee. Integrate the Advocacy Committee and revive the dormant Membership Committee into the DBA Committee and have them serve as subcommittees. This change will better represent the DBA holistically and be consistent with the committee level responsibility found with the Economic Development Committee and BID Committee. The Pocket Parks and Public Art subcommittees will be retained in scope and they will continue to be housed under the DBA Committee. The dormant Bike Friendly Subcommittee will be revived, renamed, and the scope will be expanded as the new Multi-Modal Subcommittee, which will help to implement the Multi-Modal transformative initiative in the strategic plan.

MEDIA AND OUTREACH

Downtown Billings Alliance is currently doing a great job using social and traditional media to engage and demonstrate activities and opportunity in downtown. The use of technology such as downtownbillings.com and social media channels are effectively used and should continually be evaluated to ensure the Alliance is employing the right technology to align with digital trends. The greatest opportunity for Media and Outreach is to lead an aligned campaign that reaches new audiences that have not taken full advantage of the economic, cultural, and social opportunities downtown Billings offers.

STRATEGY

Media and Outreach Campaign to New Local and Regional Audiences

Aligned Closest with the Goal: A Sustainable Downtown Billings Alliance

Design and implement a multi-faceted media and outreach campaign targeting new audiences that have yet to take advantage of the economic, cultural, and social opportunities in downtown. This will require an understanding of who isn't coming downtown, overcoming misconceptions, and engaging them on their level and with media that they consume. Expanding audiences is a key strategy to enhance the vibrancy and economic competitiveness of downtown, so a concerted campaign can reap grand rewards.

ACTION ITEM #1:

Align with key partners such as Big Sky Economic Development, the City of Billings, and Visit Billings and contract with an advertising firm to design and implement a targeted outreach campaign to attract local and regional patrons of downtown retail, events, and possibly new entrepreneurs.

FACILITIES, EQUIPMENT, AND FURNISHING

Facilities, equipment, and furnishings serve as the tools to implement Downtown Billings Alliance's daily operations. From computers and software, to desks, and mechanical equipment, it is important that the Alliance Team has the resources needed to fulfill strategic requirements and daily work.

STRATEGY

Shared Procurement

Aligned Closest with the Goal: A Sustainable Downtown Billings Alliance

Downtown Billings Alliance will explore the opportunities for shared procurement with the City, County, and regional non-profits to potentially reduce expenses.

ACTION ITEM #1:

Research legal authorization to conduct shared procurement in respect to the BID and DBP specifically.

ACTION ITEM #2:

Engage local governments and regional non-profits regarding the opportunity of shared procurement.

ACTION ITEM #3:

Research best practices in shared procurement.

ACTION ITEM #4:

If Downtown Billings Alliance and partners decide to proceed with shared procurement, these partners will develop policies to govern procurement.

STRATEGY

Facilities, Equipment, and Furnishings SWOT

Aligned Closest with the Goal: A Sustainable Downtown Billings Alliance

The Downtown Billings Alliance BID Director or Director of Operations will assess existing conditions to determine facility; equipment; and furnishing needs, which will guide operational budgeting in the near, mid, and long term.

ACTION ITEM #1:

The Downtown Billings Alliance BID Director or Director of Operations will conduct an internal Facilities, Equipment, and Furnishing Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis.

STRATEGY

Customer Relationship Management Software (CRM)

Aligned Closest with the Goal: A Sustainable Downtown Billings Alliance

CRM is an effective tool to organize and engage existing and prospective members, businesses, investors, developers, partners, and Board and Committee members. CRM serves as an effective shared resource to manage these relationships as they help to avoid duplicative communications, organize client or partner contact information, and retain sensitive documentation all in a typically mobile and secure technological asset.

ACTION ITEM #1:

Assess the potential internal use of a CRM and how it aligns with goals in the strategic plan and daily work. Upon confirming that it is a tool that will be effective, the Alliance will set a budget for a CRM, explore licensing needs, and write and advertise an RFP to contract with a CRM provider.

FINANCIAL GROWTH

The Downtown Billings Alliance has a proven record of managing revenue from diverse income sources. As the organization continues to build on this foundation, there are several opportunities to grow and further diversify revenue sources including grant writing, membership, programmatic efficiencies, and BID Service Contracts with the Parks, Recreation, and Cemetery Management Board.

STRATEGY

Pursue Transformative Grants

Aligned Closest with the Goal: A Sustainable Downtown Billings Alliance

Work with community partners to pursue transformative grants in the areas of creative placemaking, diversity and inclusion, public arts, and public health.

ACTION ITEM #1:

Institutionalize grant writing as an internal role for the Downtown Billings Alliance.

ACTION ITEM #2:

Build partnerships with existing nonprofit organizations to seek funding for projects that align across missions. For example, Riverstone Health is among few organizations nationally to receive funding from the Kresge Foundation for FreshLo, a program that uses creative placemaking and community engagement to address food insecurity.

ACTION ITEM #3:

Utilize the Funding Environment Scan (Appendix D) to identify potential funding opportunities for transformative placemaking projects that align with strategic priorities.

STRATEGY

Grow DBA Membership

Aligned Closest with the Goal: A Sustainable Downtown Billings Alliance

The DBA has created a robust membership program with mission-aligned benefits, generating over 20% of the annual organizational revenue. The DBA has the opportunity to grow their membership base by expanding member levels to reach students, individuals, and families in and around downtown.

ACTION ITEM #1:

Create a custom level membership for individuals in the \$35 to \$75 per year range.

ACTION ITEM #2:

Work with MSUB and Rocky Mountain to custom design a membership program for student engagement in downtown. The membership fee would be prorated for the student and could possibly be waived in lieu of volunteer service.

ACTION ITEM #3:

Grow marketing efforts to build membership outside of the downtown, particularly targeting key leaders, industries, and neighborhoods.

ACTION ITEM #4:

Review existing parking voucher and token programs for alignment with individual, family, or student membership levels.

STRATEGY

Internal Review of Programs

Aligned Closest with the Goal: A Sustainable Downtown Billings Alliance

As the Downtown Billings Alliance has grown incrementally over time, the number and scope of programs has also grown. With the hire of a new President and CEO and Economic Development Director, the timing is correct to step back and review programmatic efficiencies and opportunities to streamline workload.

ACTION ITEM #1:

Utilize a Program Contribution Analysis^{32,33} to review each program across a mission of financial contribution and mission match.

³² “Program contribution analysis helps nonprofits with multiple programs to understand the contribution each program makes to both the mission and the financial health of the organization.”

³³ The Bridgespan Group, “Program Contribution Analysis”, <https://www.bridgespan.org/insights/library/nonprofit-management-tools-and-trends/program-contribution-analysis>, (accessed December 13, 2017)



Figure 2: Program Contribution Analysis³⁴

ACTION ITEM #2:

Present the findings of each program for each entity to their corresponding Boards for an open discussion of any high performing or low performing programs.

STRATEGY

Internal and External Financial Audit

Aligned Closest with the Goal: A Sustainable Downtown Billings Alliance

The Downtown Billings Alliance is experiencing a transition in leadership which requires studious financial oversight from the Board of Directors. A third party review of the financial health of the Downtown Billings Alliance would provide invaluable information to the Board and new staff. Additionally, many foundations require three years of financial audits as criteria to receive funding.

ACTION ITEM #1:

Hire an outside firm to conduct an internal and external financial audit.

STRATEGY

Pursue a Service Contract with the Parks, Recreation, and Cemetery Management Board

Aligned Closest with the Goal: A Sustainable Downtown Billings Alliance

The BID Street Team has a proven track record of public realm maintenance and may be able to generate additional net revenue through a contract with the Parks, Recreation, and Cemetery Management Board. This strategy is reliant on the specific terms of a contract and should only be considered if there is decent financial gain for Downtown Billings Alliance.

³⁴ The Bridgespan Group, "Program Contribution Analysis"

ACTION ITEM #1:

Evaluate the financial opportunities to expand service contracts with the Parks, Recreation, and Cemetery Management Board through the BID Street Team.

STRATEGY

Direct Fundraising

Aligned Closest with the Goal: A Sustainable Downtown Billings Alliance

The Downtown Billings Alliance does not have a history of leveraging their support base through direct fundraising. Many entities contribute through their assessment, membership, or event sponsorship but many potential donors are missed by way of not being asked.

ACTION ITEM #1:

Staff and Board Members develop a fundraising goal and plan aligned with the Annual Work Plan and budget.

ACTION ITEM #2:

Produce an annual fundraiser, potentially a Gala.

ACTION ITEM #3:

Leverage small donations from the community through crowdfunding. Utilize online platforms designed for placemaking and nonprofits like Ioby.

DOWNTOWN BILLINGS ALLIANCE PROGRAMMING

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Downtown Billings Alliance has an important role serving the economic development needs of downtown Billings. The Alliance works closely with Big Sky Economic Development, which facilitates regional economic development resources and state-level incentives and programs. Complementing these resources, Downtown Billings Alliance has authority to project manage TIF requests that will further infrastructure enhancements to support new job growth and capital investment in the urban core. The Alliance has a long history of supporting entrepreneurial efforts as well. Resources and programming provided include the Revolving Loan Fund and the Battle of the Plans. Downtown Billings Alliance will continue to lead economic development efforts for downtown, expand the scope of programming, while partnering with key regional partners to create good jobs and capital investment.

STRATEGY

Talent Attraction

Aligned Closest with the Goal: A Diverse Economic Engine

Talent attraction is an important component to the retention and expansion of existing downtown and regional businesses and supports holistic growth opportunities. Through a regional effort led by BillingsWorks Workforce Council, a program of Big Sky Economic Development, Downtown Billings Alliance will support BillingsWorks by facilitating communication with downtown businesses and organizations, providing available data, and supporting media and outreach efforts.

ACTION ITEM #1:

Express organizational support for BillingsWorks through relationship hand-off, data, media, and outreach.

STRATEGY

Target Industries

Aligned Closest with the Goal: A Diverse Economic Engine

An effective and holistic economic development strategy requires the identification of target industries. Identifying target industries ensures economic development efforts focus on sectors that the downtown, city, or region can likely create, expand, or attract. An Industry Assessment was produced to support the development of the strategic plan and it can be seen in Appendix A: Industry Assessment. The Industry Assessment explores existing industry data and projections in the Billings MSA, which includes Yellowstone County (Billings), Golden Valley County, and Carbon County. The Assessment includes business data and projections for the entire MSA to more broadly understand existing industry conditions, and make recommendations on how Downtown Billings Alliance can facilitate corporate or supportive economic development opportunities for downtown.

Key Industries

Through an analysis of industry jobs, projected job growth, and competitive advantages, the assessment of the Billings MSA identified six key industries.

- General Medical and Surgical Hospitals
- Restaurants and Other Eating Places
- Wired Telecommunication Carriers
- Retail Stores
- Petroleum and Coal Products Manufacturing

- Professional Services

Developing Strategies to Expand Key Industries

The following target industry strategies were developed from the integration of objective data in the Industry Assessment; assumptions for the key industries; as well as other relevant industries including rail, banking, and arts; the Economic Development and Entrepreneurship/Small Business focus groups; and interviews with key economic development partners to develop specific strategies to expand the diversified downtown economy.

- **General Medical and Surgical Hospitals**
 - Expand clinical research and facilitate commercialization of medical devices and pharmaceuticals
 - Attract clinical research organizations (CROs)
 - Retain and expand corporate hospital functions
 - Create new service businesses
 - Emphasize and support MSUB programs including Allied Health Programs, Nursing Programs, and Pre-Professional Studies
- **Restaurants and Other Eating Places**
 - Restaurants represent excellent opportunities for entrepreneurs but also emphasize the authenticity of the downtown community and help to retain talent and corporate functions in downtown
- **Wired Telecommunication Carriers**
 - Assess the existing telecommunications and broadband infrastructure serving downtown businesses
 - Work with MSUB to ensure they are providing the educational resources needed to further develop the workforce for the Wired Telecommunication Carriers industry
- **Retail Stores - Sporting Goods, Hobby, and Musical Instrument Stores**
 - From Kampgrounds of America (KOA)'s corporate headquarter presence to mountain wear entrepreneur Aspinwall, Downtown Billings has an excellent opportunity to be recognized as the national headquarters of outdoor recreation, sporting goods, and outdoor wear
 - There are at least 47 Sporting Goods Stores in the Billings market
 - KOA, Aspinwall, and many others can form industry clusters and other partnerships to attract, expand, and create complementary outdoor recreation, sporting goods, and outdoor wear businesses
- **Petroleum and Coal Products Manufacturing**
 - Work with MSUB, other colleges, and high schools to ensure they are providing the educational resources needed to further develop the workforce for the Petroleum and Coal Products Manufacturing industry
 - Attract Petroleum and Coal Products Manufacturing firms' corporate headquarters or supportive corporate functions
- **Railroad Transportation Industry**
 - Facilitate the Railroad Transportation industry's needs while balancing the economic opportunity with the character of downtown
 - Leveraging Billings' founding and continued tradition, attract Railroad Transportation industry firms' corporate headquarters or supportive corporate functions
- **Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, and Visitor Cluster**
 - Leverage Billings' industrial-rail, cultural, and natural heritage to support existing arts initiatives and organizations, museums, and recreational assets

- Champion the fact that Billings is the largest city in the state and six-state region and position downtown as the cultural epicenter
- **Banking Industry**
 - Demonstrate the access to capital available to entrepreneurs, small and mid-sized businesses, and corporations to affirm that Billings has major banking institutions available to do business with
 - Support the growth of the banking industry by championing the industry's role in community initiatives, lending to businesses, and housing
 - Ensure the connectivity between high-school and university students and the banking industry to demonstrate opportunities for high-wage and impactful careers

ACTION ITEM #1:

Align all economic development efforts with the identified target industries.

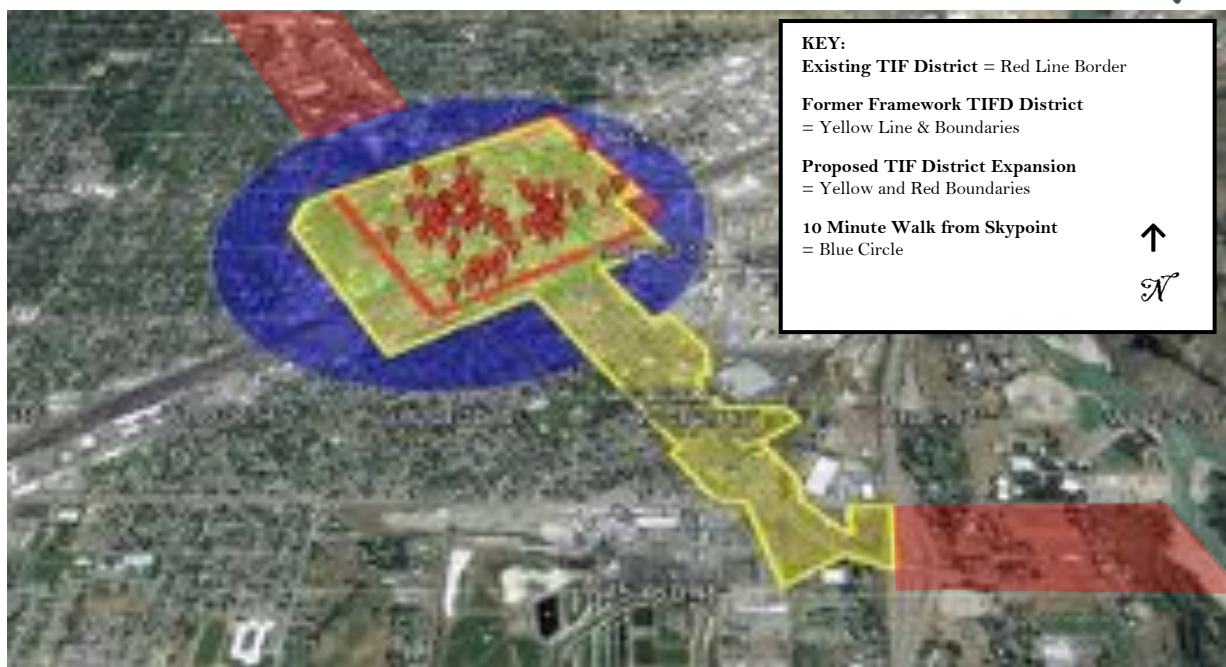
STRATEGY

Expand TIF Districts

Aligned Closest with the Goal: A Diverse Economic Engine

Downtown Billings Alliance, through the DBP, has effectively used TIF as a tool to develop or redevelop over 285 projects in downtown. These range from investments that have supported educational institutions, hotel renovations, and retained and expanded corporate headquarters. TIF will remain an effective tool to support the development and redevelopment of priorities including mixed-use projects, housing, and other infrastructure to support economic development. TIF also will complement the Mixed-use Anchor Strategy transformative initiative, though it will not serve as the sole development tool.

Downtown Billings Alliance, through the DBP, should explore expanding TIF boundaries. This further supports the Mixed-use Anchor Strategy and the Connectivity to the Yellowstone River strategy seen later in the strategic plan. Therefore, the Alliance, through the DBP, should commission a detail financial assessment to explore the expansion of the TIF boundaries to the Framework TIFD District as a starting point, but expanding northwest along North 27th Street to MSUB and on the opposite end of the former district, expand the TIF boundaries from where it ended at I-90 on to the Yellowstone River.



Credit: <https://www.google.com/earth/>

ACTION ITEM #1:

Commission a financial feasibility study on the expansion of the current TIF district to match the Framework TIFD District and extend that to MSUB and the Yellowstone River.

STRATEGY

Develop Public, Private, Partnerships

Aligned Closest with the Goal: A Diverse Economic Engine

In concert with the transformative initiatives and other priorities, Downtown Billings Alliance will work with private and public partners to explore P3 as authorized by the State of Montana. These partnerships will enhance opportunities to meet the demands of economic development and future infrastructure needs.

ACTION ITEM #1:

Partner with the Billings Chamber of Commerce, Big Sky Economic Development, local governments, and other partners to advocate for any needed legislation to fully enable opportunities for P3.

ACTION ITEM #2:

Identify gaps in infrastructure funding and develop a prioritized plan for P3 opportunities.

ACTION ITEM #3:

Write and advertise RFPs as needed to form P3s.

STRATEGY

Entrepreneurial Support

Aligned Closest with the Goal: A Diverse Economic Engine

Entrepreneurs and small businesses are drivers of the economy. They support primary industries and large enterprises and develop new economies of their own. Supporting entrepreneurs is a key foundation to any economic development strategy and must be realized in downtown Billings.

ACTION ITEM #1:

Work with Big Sky Economic Development, MSUB, Rocky Mountain College, and Zoot Enterprises to ensure the Billings Business Incubator is located in downtown Billings. Downtown Billings Alliance must treat this as a competitive economic development project and lead the site selection services and supportive mechanisms to win this investment in downtown.

ACTION ITEM #2:

Execute a retail strategy. Downtown Billings Alliance will focus entrepreneurial support, attraction, and retention efforts on retailers and service providers desired by downtown residents. This should include neighborhood goods and services such as grocery stores, pharmacies, dry cleaners, and other goods and service providers. Ensuring these providers are in place will help facilitate opportunities to attract more downtown residents and likewise support these small business owners.

The Alliance should also facilitate the creation of the Downtown Billings Retailer Network. The Network will encourage inter-sector support on matters such as recruiting workforce, shared procurement, and coordination with services and programs provided by Downtown Billings Alliance, Big Sky Economic Development, and other regional partners.

Downtown Billings Alliance will support retailers through the following actions:

- Target neighborhood goods and services businesses through entrepreneurial support, attraction, and retention efforts.
- Form the Downtown Billings Retailer Network to facilitate inter-sector support.

ACTION ITEM #3:

Enhance the Downtown Billings Alliance Battle of the Plans Business Plan Competition. The Battle of the Plans is an impressive entrepreneurial strategy and program that includes relevant and important partners at Big Sky Economic Development / Small Business Development Center, MSUB, Billings Chamber of Commerce, and Rocky Mountain College. The Alliance should continue to support and strengthen this program through the following adaptations:

- Broaden the industry focus from solely Retail to align with the Target Industries identified in the strategic plan. As seen, Retail is an included target industry. Yet, other target industries include high-paying occupations, businesses that create tiered suppliers and support businesses, and have the potential to realize large capital investments.
- Attract private investors and businesses to support the program. This has many benefits including ensuring the program is representative of the private sector; offers industry expertise and guidance to both the program and to the entrepreneurs; expands the grant awards; enhances the sustainability of the program; and represents a larger strategy of having the private sector invested in downtown and regional economic development.

ACTION ITEM #4:

Downtown Billings Alliance will align entrepreneurial support efforts and champion partners' programming to provide comprehensive support and guidance to entrepreneurs and small businesses. This specifically includes resources at the Small Business Development Center with Big Sky Economic Development.

STRATEGY

BRE Visitation Program in Coordination with Big Sky Economic Development

Aligned Closest with the Goal: A Diverse Economic Engine

In his seminal work, economist David L. Birch explained that up to 80% of net new job growth is developed from existing businesses.³⁵ As a critical component to any community's toolbox of economic development services, a Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) program provides assistance to existing companies to facilitate growth and expansion leading to new jobs and capital investment. Further, a BRE program prevents companies from relocating or closing. The primary objective of a BRE program is to identify and address the needs of businesses and is accomplished through sustained relationships, allowing communities to better align policies, investments, and economic development efforts with its clients.

There are a variety of ways to create and implement a BRE program, including developing a multifaceted program that gathers crucial intelligence, offers technical assistance, and helps a variety of business types to grow. Fundamentally, the Downtown Billings Alliance and Big Sky Economic Development have an opportunity develop a coordinated BRE program that will position downtown and the region to be seen as a direct resource provider that facilitates the expansion of jobs and investment. This includes being a financial and technical assistance provider, a broker of assistance resources, and a business community advocate in relation to the business climate and associated policies and procedures.

ACTION ITEM #1:

Coordinate with Big Sky Economic Development on the development of a formal BRE visitation program.

ACTION ITEM #2:

Create a shared BRE Program Manager position, funded by Downtown Billings Alliance, Big Sky Economic Development, and the Billings Chamber of Commerce.

STRATEGY

Inbound Site Selector Familiarization Tour

Aligned Closest with the Goal: A Diverse Economic Engine

Big Sky Economic Development leads regional economic development including outbound site selector engagement. However, Downtown Billings Alliance holds an important role in demonstrating investment potential to prospective businesses and site selectors. Big Sky Economic Development is planning to host site selectors from around the country at an in-bound site selector familiarization tour as early as 2018. The Alliance should coordinate and support efforts with Big Sky Economic Development and ensure that downtown's sites and buildings, businesses, infrastructure, quality of life, and resources are fully demonstrated.

³⁵ Birch, David L. 1979. "The Job Generation Process." Report prepared for the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration, Washington, D.C. ———. 1981. "Who Creates Jobs?" *The Public Interest*, no. 65: 3–14. ———. 1987. *Job Creation in America: How Our Smallest Companies Put the Most People to Work*. New York: The Free Press.

ACTION ITEM #1:

Coordinate and support Big Sky Economic Development in the planning of the in-bound site selector familiarization tour.

PUBLIC ART AND PLACEMAKING

Public Art and Placemaking contributes to the authenticity and culture of downtown and helps to implement the goal of ensuring downtown has a strong identity. Public Art and Placemaking encourages expression, celebrates cultures of all backgrounds, and supports economic, cultural, and social opportunities.

STRATEGY

Illuminate Skypoint

Aligned Closest with the Goal: A Strong Downtown Identity

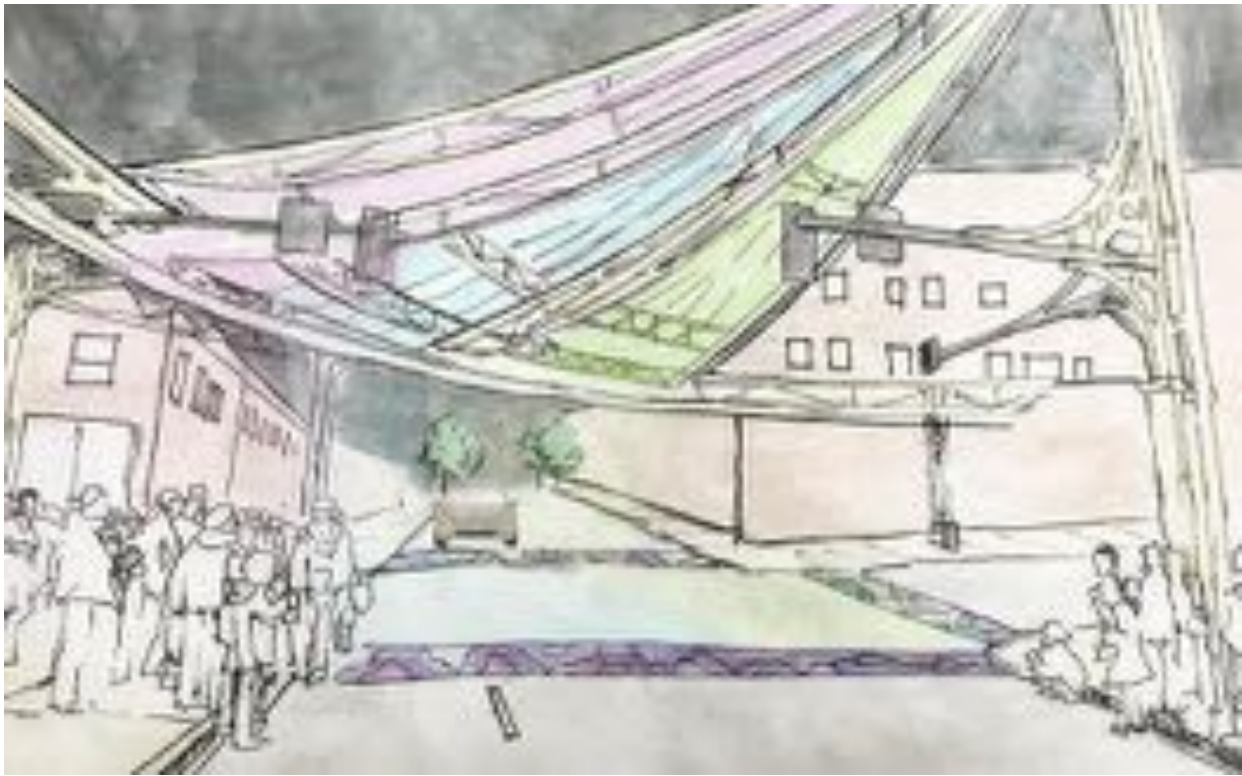
Downtown Billings Alliance will illuminate Skypoint to bring vibrancy to the city center at night. The Alliance will commission a lighting designer with experience in large public artistic lighting design to create a lighting scheme for this asset. Rather than a static display, the use of new technologies such as LED and light tubes with programmable colors and patterns could bring new relevance to the landmark. For example, it could be illuminated in moving patterns of red, white, and blue in observance of Independence Day; or in pink to observe Breast Cancer Awareness month. There could be a partnership/sponsorship with a local TV station where Skypoint would, by color, indicate the weather forecast for the next day (Red=Warmer, Blue=Colder, White=No Change, Green=Precipitation).

ACTION ITEM #1:

Commission a lighting designer to add programmable and adaptable lighting elements to Skypoint.

ACTION ITEM #2:

Seek partnership and sponsorship opportunities for the initial investment in a lighting system, which may end up being a revenue generator.



Skypoint – Downtown Billings. Conceptual Perspective. Max Hammer, 2017

STRATEGY

Celebrate Individual Artists

Aligned Closest with the Goal: A Vibrant and Connected 24-Hour Downtown

Celebrate and elevate individual artists from diverse mediums who have connections to Billings. Use social media, storytelling, and public space to show community pride and local artistry.

ACTION ITEM #1:

Work with local artists and arts organizations to identify talented and successful artists with connections to Billings in a variety of mediums. Feature these artists through interviews, social media, and existing programs like the Art Walk.

ACTION ITEM #2:

Elevate the arts and stories of artists through DBA media assets, regional and state news outlets, and through Visit Billings.

STRATEGY

Activate a Surface Parking Lot into a Pop-Up Performance Park in Order to Host Mid-Sized Entrepreneurial and Arts Events

Aligned Closest with the Goal: A Vibrant and Connected 24-Hour Downtown

Downtown Billings has a number of surface parking lots and a shortage of public gathering space. Downtown Billings Alliance has the opportunity to use tactical urbanism techniques to create a pop-up performance park that functions as a parking lot during the day but a public gathering space in the evening. This space would be utilized for small to mid-sized events that focus on community engagement, expression, and creative activation. Downtown Colorado Inc. has a list of 27 ideas for activating space for reference.³⁶ This is an opportunity to execute projects with community partners and try new ideas.

ACTION ITEM #1:

Conduct a review of potential surface parking lots with willing property owners; these may include the City of Billings. Create a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the property owner to enable the DBA to conduct an individual or series of programs in the lot, ideally including public art installations.

ACTION ITEM #2:

Work with arts organizations to showcase and market their programming free and to the public in pop-up performance parks. For example, work with a local theater to perform a couple of scenes from an active production or an orchestra for an outdoor show. Design the space for people and invite food trucks.

STRATEGY

Scale-Up Public Arts Initiatives

Aligned Closest with the Goal: A Vibrant and Connected 24-Hour Downtown

Develop bold public arts projects that reinforce the local culture and a sense of place. Integrate the community into the process wherever possible and utilize existing anchor events like the Art Walk to engage the community on specific ideas or actions.

ACTION ITEM #1:

Create an ambitious plan for five art installations in five years. Convene the Public Arts Committee to identify five sites within the downtown for murals, performance, or sculptural installations. Identify public art priorities such as community engagement, health, functionality, cultural expression, and safety.

ACTION ITEM # 2:

Develop budgets and funding strategies for the five pieces in five years / 5 in 5 plan. Consider grant opportunities and corporate partnerships. The budgets should include artist commission, materials, marketing, community engagement, and ongoing maintenance.

ACTION ITEM #3:

Name and brand the 5 in 5 campaign and announce to the public the dates for release of the Requests for Proposals for each site. Build anticipation for the future public arts projects.

ACTION ITEM #4:

Release the Request for Proposal and market broadly. Create a decision matrix and appoint a jury for review of the artist proposals. Utilize a consistent process every year for five years.

³⁶ Downtown Colorado Inc., "27 Ideas for Activating Vacant Space", <https://downtowncoloradoinc.wordpress.com/2014/06/11/27-ideas-for-activating-vacant-space/>, (accessed December 13, 2017)

STRATEGY

Assemble Parcels to Develop More Downtown Parks

Aligned Closest with the Goal: A Vibrant and Connected 24-Hour Downtown

Downtown parks provide respite from a busy day while also offering entertainment, social, cultural, and economic connectivity. Downtown parks break up a monotonous land use and provide interest in the balance of high density. These parks should be versatile and offer a variety of uses. “Successful parks usually have five elements associated with them. They are engaging, adaptable, authentic, connected and iconic. They should be designed to provide comfort, convenience and enjoyment, fostering social interactions and physical connectivity.”³⁷ Downtown parks have the opportunity to meet the strategic plan goal of a vibrant and connected 24-hour downtown. “Parks located in a downtown area need to attract people 24 hours a day, seven days a week, year-round. They need to be authentic, celebrating the unique and individual identity, heritage and culture of a particular place and contribute to the quality of life of the neighborhood or city.”³⁸ Though downtown parks are aligned with the strategic plan, downtown Billings currently does not have an adequate number of parks for the community to enjoy.



As seen in the Billings Parks and Recreation map on the left and the Google aerial image map above, there is a low concentration of parks and green space in downtown Billings.

Credit: <http://www.billingsparks.org/park-finder/>;

Downtown currently has two parks including Dehler Park, which provides a limited multi-use offering as it is the home of the Billings Mustangs baseball team – the rookie affiliate of the Cincinnati Reds, and the Downtown Skatepark. There is another small unofficial park located at the corner of North 27th and 2nd Avenue and two small parks on the edge of downtown – Founders Park and Community Park. To

overcome the tremendous lack of parks in the urban core, Downtown Billings Alliance will coordinate with public and private partners to consolidate parcels for the development of one or several downtown parks covering at least a city block.

³⁷ Cynthia A. Bowen, “The Economic Benefit of Downtown Parks”, National Recreation and Park Association, <http://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2017/september/the-economic-benefit-of-downtown-parks/>, (accessed December 13, 2017)

³⁸ Cynthia A. Bowen, “The Economic Benefit of Downtown Parks”

ACTION ITEM #1:

Coordinate with Billings Parks and Recreation / Department of Parks, Recreation and Public Lands (PRPL), other public partners, and private land owners to assemble parcels for the development of one or several downtown parks.

OUTREACH AND SERVICES

Downtown Billings Alliance provides safety and social support programs including Downtown Cops, Community Innovations, and Spare Change for Real Change to proactively respond and care for individuals in sometimes challenging situations.

STRATEGY

Maintain and Support High-Performing Outreach and Service Programs

Aligned Closest with the Goal: A Strong Downtown Identity

Downtown Billings Alliance has made a concerted effort to elevate the expectation of how downtowns respond to diverse individuals, some needing support and others that live alternative lifestyles. Downtown Billings Alliance has impressively embraced the authenticity of the individual and developed resources and programs for those that may need compassionate care. From Downtown Cops, to Community Innovations, to Spare Change for Real Change, the Alliance has been deliberate about engaging individuals from all walks of life in downtown. This has resulted in programming that is focused on safety and compassionate resources – all adding to the evolution of vibrancy in downtown. Downtown Billings Alliance will maintain and support high-performing community outreach and service programs that advance how downtown responds to unique individuals who are celebrated and sometimes need love and support.

ACTION ITEM #1:

Downtown Billings Alliance will maintain and support high-performing community outreach and service programs.

STRATEGY

Partner with Faith Institutions and Faith Leaders

Aligned Closest with the Goal: A Strong Downtown Identity

Downtown Billings Alliance and the downtown community are fortunate to have numerous Faith institutions and Faith Leaders to support outreach and service initiatives that the Alliance directly or indirectly is associated with. These institutions and leaders serve a pivotal role in integrating Faith, service, and resources to connect with individuals and groups from varying backgrounds – some of whom need help.

ACTION ITEM #1:

Downtown Billings Alliance will create and expand relationships and potentially formal partnerships with Faith Institutions and Faith Leaders serving the downtown Billings community.

DOWNTOWN BILLINGS ALLIANCE PARTNERSHIPS

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

The scope of organization, programming, and opportunity have expanded for Downtown Billings Alliance. There are many strategies aligned in the strategic plan that asserts the Alliance's ownership in execution. However, there are other important strategies that affect downtown that Downtown Billings Alliance should be a part of but not lead. Rather, the Alliance will coordinate with key relevant partners to achieve the following strategies.

STRATEGY

Leadership Dialogue Session

Aligned Closest with the Goal: A Diverse Economic Engine

Communication amongst regional leaders is crucial to the execution of local and regional strategies. Further, deliberate communication and partnership dissolves barriers and enhances the connectivity to ensure public, non-profit, and private organizations are meeting the needs of their stakeholders. The Executive Boards of Downtown Billings Alliance, Big Sky Economic Development, the Billings Chamber of Commerce, the City of Billings, and Yellowstone County have formed a working group called the Leadership Dialogue Session to serve as a working session to communicate and align strategies and activities throughout the year. This impressive collaboration is a testament to the power of regionalism and cooperation. Though this effort should be celebrated, the Session has only occurred once a year. Downtown Billings Alliance will work with regional Boards to increase the frequency of the Leadership Dialogue Session.

ACTION ITEM #1:

Increase the frequency of the Leadership Dialogue Session to occur once a quarter.

STRATEGY

Connectivity to the Yellowstone River

Aligned Closest with the Goal: A Vibrant and Connected 24-Hour Downtown

The downtown Billings community and others have expressed a desire to find a way to navigate neighborhoods, industry, infrastructure, and nature to develop expanded access to the Yellowstone River. The River is a beautiful asset that has not been made accessible to the community; especially for pedestrians in downtown and surrounding neighborhoods. BillingsNow has been leading efforts to explore development opportunities at Coulson Park in coordination with MDT's expected changes for I-90, which runs along Coulson Park and the Yellowstone River. Downtown Billings Alliance will coordinate with BillingsNow and other stakeholders to explore access and development potential stretching from Coulson Park southwest to Riverfront Park to expand opportunities for this natural asset to complement the vibrancy of downtown and surrounding neighborhoods.

ACTION ITEM #1:

Coordinate with BillingsNow and other stakeholders to explore access and development potential along the Yellowstone River.

STRATEGY

Unified Arts Community

Aligned Closest with the Goal: A Vibrant and Connected 24-Hour Downtown

Billings has an extensive set of arts organizations operating in downtown and throughout the city. The entities are often competing for limited funding resources. There is opportunity for more coordination among all of Billings' arts organizations and the DBA should take an active role in participation.

ACTION ITEM #1:

Identify opportunities to partner with an arts organization on grant applications for a program that elevates their work and also contributes to the economic vibrancy of the downtown.

ACTION ITEM #2:

Invite arts champions to a bi-annual Billings arts social event in downtown to build relationships among different entities.

ACTION ITEM #3:

Holistically promote all of the arts organizations in downtown through a marketing piece or one-to-one engagement opportunity. For example, host an "Arts and Drafts" event at one of the breweries where arts organizations set up an area to share their programs.

A black and white photograph of a woman in a factory setting, smiling as she operates a sewing machine. The machine is a vintage-style industrial model with a large hand-crank wheel on the left. The woman is wearing a light-colored sleeveless top. The background shows a large industrial space with high ceilings, exposed pipes, and large windows. The overall tone is industrial and focused on craftsmanship.

ACTION MATRIX

DOWNTOWN BILLINGS ALLIANCE SUSTAINABILITY

DOWNTOWN BILLINGS ALLIANCE TEAM ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Strategy: Enhance Downtown Billings Alliance Team Organizational Structure

ACTION ITEM #1:

Review job descriptions for all roles.

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:

Six (6) Months – One (1) Year

ACTION ITEM #2:

Review operating budget, allocation among current Team and new hires, and identify opportunities to expand the Team and retain existing talent through salary adjustments.

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:

Six (6) Months – One (1) Year

COMMITTEES

Strategy: Enhanced Committees

ACTION ITEM #1:

Develop a single Alliance Finance Committee.

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:

Six (6) Months – One (1) Year

ACTION ITEM #2:

Change the name of the Development Committee to the Economic Development Committee.

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:

Six (6) Months – One (1) Year

ACTION ITEM #3:

Form a BID Committee.

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:

Six (6) Months – One (1) Year

ACTION ITEM #4:

Adapt the Projects and Promotions Committee's name and scope to become the DBA Committee. Integrate the Advocacy Committee and revive the dormant Membership Committee into the DBA Committee and have them serve as subcommittees. The Pocket Parks and Public Art subcommittees will be retained in scope and they will continue to be housed under the DBA Committee. The dormant Bike Friendly Subcommittee will be revived, renamed, and the scope will be expanded as the new Multi-Modal Subcommittee, which will help to implement the Multi-Modal transformative initiative in the strategic plan.

PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:

Six (6) Months – One (1) Year

MEDIA AND OUTREACH	
Strategy: Media and Outreach Campaign to New Local and Regional Audiences	
<u>ACTION ITEM #1:</u> Align with key partners such as Big Sky Economic Development, the City of Billings, and Visit Billings and contract with an advertising firm to design and implement a targeted outreach campaign to attract local and regional patrons of downtown retail, events, and possibly new entrepreneurs.	<u>PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:</u> One (1) Year – Three (3) Years
FACILITIES, EQUIPMENT, AND FURNISHING	
Strategy: Shared Procurement	
<u>ACTION ITEM #1:</u> Research legal authorization to conduct shared procurement.	<u>PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:</u> Six (6) Months – One (1) Year
<u>ACTION ITEM #2:</u> Engage local governments and regional non-profits regarding the opportunity of shared procurement.	<u>PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:</u> Six (6) Months – One (1) Year
<u>ACTION ITEM #3:</u> Research best practices in shared procurement.	<u>PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:</u> Six (6) Months – One (1) Year
<u>ACTION ITEM #4:</u> If Downtown Billings Alliance and partners decide to proceed with shared procurement, these partners will develop policies to govern procurement.	<u>PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:</u> One (1) Year – Three (3) Years
Strategy: Facilities, Equipment, and Furnishing SWOT	
<u>ACTION ITEM #1:</u> The Downtown Billings Alliance BID Director or Director of Operations will conduct an internal Facilities, Equipment, and Furnishing SWOT analysis.	<u>PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:</u> Six (6) Months – One (1) Year
Strategy: Customer Relationship Management Software (CRM)	
<u>ACTION ITEM #1:</u> Assess the potential internal use of a CRM.	<u>PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:</u> One (1) Year – Three (3) Years

FINANCIAL GROWTH	
Strategy: Pursue Transformative Grants	
<u>ACTION ITEM #1:</u> Institutionalize grant writing as an internal role for the Downtown Billings Alliance.	<u>PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:</u> One (1) Year – Three (3) Years
<u>ACTION ITEM #2:</u> Build partnerships with existing nonprofit organizations to seek funding for projects that align across missions.	<u>PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:</u> One (1) Year – Three (3) Years
<u>ACTION ITEM #3:</u> Utilize the Funding Environment Scan (Appendix D) to identify potential funding opportunities for transformative placemaking projects.	<u>PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:</u> One (1) Year – Three (3) Years
Strategy: Grow DBA membership	
<u>ACTION ITEM #1:</u> Create a custom level membership for individuals in the \$35 to \$75 per year range.	<u>PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:</u> Six (6) Months – One (1) Year
<u>ACTION ITEM #2:</u> Work with MSUB and Rocky Mountain to custom design a membership program for student engagement in downtown.	<u>PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:</u> Six (6) Months – One (1) Year
<u>ACTION ITEM #3:</u> Grow marketing efforts to build membership outside of the downtown, particularly targeting key industries and neighborhoods.	<u>PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:</u> Six (6) Months – One (1) Year
<u>ACTION ITEM #4:</u> Review existing parking benefits for alignment with individual, family, or student membership levels.	<u>PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:</u> Six (6) Months – One (1) Year
Strategy: Internal Review of Programs	
<u>ACTION ITEM #1:</u> Utilize a Program Contribution Analysis to review each program across a mission of financial contribution and mission match.	<u>PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:</u> Six (6) Months – One (1) Year
<u>ACTION ITEM #2:</u> Present the findings of each program for each entity to their corresponding Boards.	<u>PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:</u> Six (6) Months – One (1) Year
Strategy: Internal and External Financial Audit	
<u>ACTION ITEM #1:</u> Hire a CPA to conduct a financial audit.	<u>PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:</u> Six (6) Months – One (1) Year

Strategy: Pursue a Service Contract with the Park Management Board	
<u>ACTION ITEM #1:</u> Evaluate the financial opportunities to expand service contracts with the Park Management Board.	<u>PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:</u> One (1) Year – Three (3) Years
Strategy: Direct Fundraising	
<u>ACTION ITEM #1:</u> Staff and Board Members develop a fundraising goal and plan aligned with the Annual Work Plan and budget.	<u>PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:</u> Six (6) Months – One (1) Year
<u>ACTION ITEM #2:</u> Produce an annual fundraiser, potentially a Gala.	<u>PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:</u> Six (6) Months – One (1) Year
<u>ACTION ITEM #3:</u> Leverage small donations from the community through crowdfunding.	<u>PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:</u> Six (6) Months – One (1) Year
DOWNTOWN BILLINGS ALLIANCE PROGRAMING	
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	
Strategy: Talent Attraction	
<u>ACTION ITEM #1:</u> Express organizational support for BillingsWorks through relationship hand-off, data, and media and outreach efforts.	<u>PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:</u> Six (6) Months – One (1) Year
Strategy: Target Industries	
<u>ACTION ITEM #1:</u> Align all economic development efforts with the identified target industries in the strategic plan.	<u>PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:</u> Six (6) Months – One (1) Year
Strategy: Expand TIF Districts	
<u>ACTION ITEM #1:</u> Commission a financial feasibility study on the expansion of the current TIF district to match the Framework TIFD District and extend that to MSUB and the Yellowstone River.	<u>PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:</u> Six (6) Months – One (1) Year

Strategy: Develop Public Private Partnerships (P3)	
<u>ACTION ITEM #1:</u> Partner with the Billings Chamber of Commerce, Big Sky Economic Development, local governments, and other partners to advocate for any needed legislation to fully enable opportunities for P3.	<u>PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:</u> Six (6) Months – One (1) Year
<u>ACTION ITEM #2:</u> Identify gaps in infrastructure funding and develop a prioritized plan for P3 opportunities.	<u>PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:</u> Six (6) Months – One (1) Year
<u>ACTION ITEM #3:</u> Write and advertise RFPs as needed to form P3s.	<u>PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:</u> One (1) Year – Three (3) Years
Strategy: Entrepreneurial Support	
<u>ACTION ITEM #1:</u> Work with Big Sky Economic Development, MSUB, Rocky Mountain College, and Zoot Enterprises to ensure the Billings Business Incubator is located in downtown Billings.	<u>PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:</u> Six (6) Months – One (1) Year
<u>ACTION ITEM #2:</u> Executive a retail strategy. Downtown Billings Alliance will focus entrepreneurial support, attraction, and retention efforts on retailers and service providers desired by downtown residents.	<u>PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:</u> Six (6) Months – One (1) Year
<u>ACTION ITEM #3:</u> Support the Downtown Billings Alliance Battle of the Plans Business Plan Competition.	<u>PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:</u> Six (6) Months – One (1) Year
<u>ACTION ITEM #4:</u> Downtown Billings Alliance will align entrepreneurial support efforts and champion partners' programming to provide comprehensive support and guidance to entrepreneurs and small businesses. This specifically includes resources at the Small Business Development Center with Big Sky Economic Development.	<u>PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:</u> Six (6) Months – One (1) Year

Strategy: BRE Visitation Program in Coordination with Big Sky Economic Development	
<u>ACTION ITEM #1:</u> Coordinate with Big Sky Economic Development on the development of a formal BRE visitation program.	<u>PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:</u> Six (6) Months – One (1) Year
<u>ACTION ITEM #2:</u> Create a shared BRE Program Manager position, funded by Downtown Billings Alliance, Big Sky Economic Development, and the Billings Chamber of Commerce.	<u>PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:</u> Six (6) Months – One (1) Year
Strategy: Inbound Site Selector Familiarization Tour	
<u>ACTION ITEM #1:</u> Coordinate and support Big Sky Economic Development in the planning of the in-bound site selector familiarization tour.	<u>PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:</u> Six (6) Months – One (1) Year
PUBLIC ART AND PLACEMAKING	
Strategy: Illuminate Skypoint	
<u>ACTION ITEM #1:</u> Commission a lighting designer to add programmable and adaptable lighting elements to Skypoint.	<u>PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:</u> One (1) Year – Three (3) Years
<u>ACTION ITEM #2:</u> Seek partnership and sponsorship opportunities for the initial investment in a lighting system, which may end up being a revenue generator.	<u>PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:</u> One (1) Year – Three (3) Years
Strategy: Celebrate Individual Artists	
<u>ACTION ITEM #1:</u> Work with local artists and arts organizations to identify talented and successful artists with connections to Billings in a variety of mediums.	<u>PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:</u> Six (6) Months – One (1) Year
<u>ACTION ITEM #2:</u> Elevate the arts and stories of artists through DBA media assets, regional and state news outlets, and through Visit Billings.	<u>PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:</u> Six (6) Months – One (1) Year

Strategy: Develop Public Gathering Space Through Pop-Up Performance Parks	
<u>ACTION ITEM #1:</u> Conduct a review of potential surface parking lots with willing property owners; these may include the City of Billings. Create a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the property owner to enable the DBA to conduct an individual or series of programs in the lot, ideally including public art installations.	<u>PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:</u> One (1) Year – Three (3) Years
<u>ACTION ITEM #2:</u> Work with arts organizations to showcase and market their programming free and to the public in pop-up performance parks.	<u>PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:</u> One (1) Year – Three (3) Years
Strategy: Scale-Up Public Arts Initiatives	
<u>ACTION ITEM #1:</u> Create an ambitious plan for five art installations in five years. Convene the Public Arts Committee to identify five sites within the downtown for murals, performance, or sculptural installations. Identify public art priorities such as community engagement, health, functionality, cultural expression, and safety.	<u>PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:</u> One (1) Year – Three (3) Years
<u>ACTION ITEM #2:</u> Develop budgets and funding strategies for the five pieces in five years / 5 in 5 plan.	<u>PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:</u> One (1) Year – Three (3) Years
<u>ACTION ITEM #3:</u> Name and brand the 5 in 5 campaign and announce to the public the dates for release of the Requests for Proposals for each site.	<u>PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:</u> One (1) Year – Three (3) Years
<u>ACTION ITEM #4:</u> Release the Request for Proposal and market broadly. Create a decision matrix and appoint a jury for review of the artist proposals.	<u>PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:</u> One (1) Year – Three (3) Years
Strategy: Assemble Parcels to Develop More Downtown Parks	
<u>ACTION ITEM #1:</u> Coordinate with Billings Parks and Recreation / Department of Parks, Recreation and Public Lands (PRPL), other public partners, and private land owners to assemble parcels for the development of one or several downtown parks.	<u>PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:</u> One (1) Year – Three (3) Years

OUTREACH AND SERVICES	
Strategy: Maintain and Support High-Performing Outreach and Service Programs	
<u>ACTION ITEM #1:</u> Downtown Billings Alliance will maintain and support high-performing community outreach and service programs.	<u>PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:</u> Six (6) Months – One (1) Year
<u>ACTION ITEM #2:</u> Partner with Faith Institutions and Faith Leaders.	<u>PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:</u> Six (6) Months – One (1) Year
DOWNTOWN BILLINGS ALLIANCE PARTNERSHIPS	
STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS	
Strategy: Leadership Dialogue Session	
<u>ACTION ITEM #1:</u> Increase the frequency of the Leadership Dialogue Session to occur once a quarter.	<u>PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:</u> Six (6) Months – One (1) Year
Strategy: Connectivity to the Yellowstone River	
<u>ACTION ITEM #1:</u> Coordinate with BillingsNow and other stakeholders to explore access and development potential along the Yellowstone River.	<u>PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:</u> One (1) Year – Three (3) Years
Strategy: Unified Arts Funding Campaign	
<u>ACTION ITEM #1:</u> Identify opportunities to partner with an arts organization on grant applications for a program that elevates their work and also contributes to the economic vibrancy of the downtown.	<u>PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:</u> Six (6) Months – One (1) Year
<u>ACTION ITEM #2:</u> Invite arts champions to a bi-annual Billings arts social event in the downtown to build relationships among different entities.	<u>PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:</u> Six (6) Months – One (1) Year
<u>ACTION ITEM #3:</u> Holistically promote all of the arts organizations in downtown through a marketing piece or one-to-one engagement opportunity.	<u>PRIORITY TIMEFRAME:</u> Six (6) Months – One (1) Year



APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: INDUSTRY ASSESSMENT

INTRODUCTION

The Industry Assessment explores existing industry data and projections in the Billings, MT Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), which includes Yellowstone County (Billings), Golden Valley County, and Carbon County. The Assessment includes business data and projections for the entire MSA to more broadly understand existing industry conditions, and make assumptions on how Downtown Billings Alliance can facilitate corporate or supportive economic development opportunities for downtown.

KEY INDUSTRIES

Through an analysis of industry jobs, projected job growth, and competitive advantages, this assessment of the Billings MSA identified six key industries.

- General Medical and Surgical Hospitals
- Restaurants and Other Eating Places
- Wired Telecommunication Carriers
- Retail Stores
- Petroleum and Coal Products Manufacturing
- Professional Services

General Medical and Surgical Hospitals has the second largest number of jobs in the MSA with 5,677 and projected to add more than 400 jobs in the next five years. The industry also has the second highest competitive effect.

Restaurants and Other Eating Places has the largest number of jobs in the MSA with 7,299 and is projected to add 400 more jobs between 2017 and 2022.

Wired Telecommunication Carriers has the largest competitive effect in the MSA and is projected to have the largest percentage increase in jobs over the next five years.

For this report, Retail Stores includes Sporting Goods, Hobby, and Musical Instrument Stores and Other General Merchandise Stores. Jobs in Sporting Goods, Hobby, and Musical Instrument are projected to growth by 25%. Other General Merchandise Stores accounts for 1,884 jobs, which is the third highest among private industries.

At 16.88, Petroleum and Coal Products Manufacturing has the highest location quotient in the MSA.

For this report, Professional Services includes Architectural, Engineering, and Related Services along with Computer Systems Design and Related Services. Professional Services accounts for nearly 2,800 jobs in the MSA. New development opportunities in downtown, such as the One Big Sky Center, could have a role in accommodating growth in Professional Services.

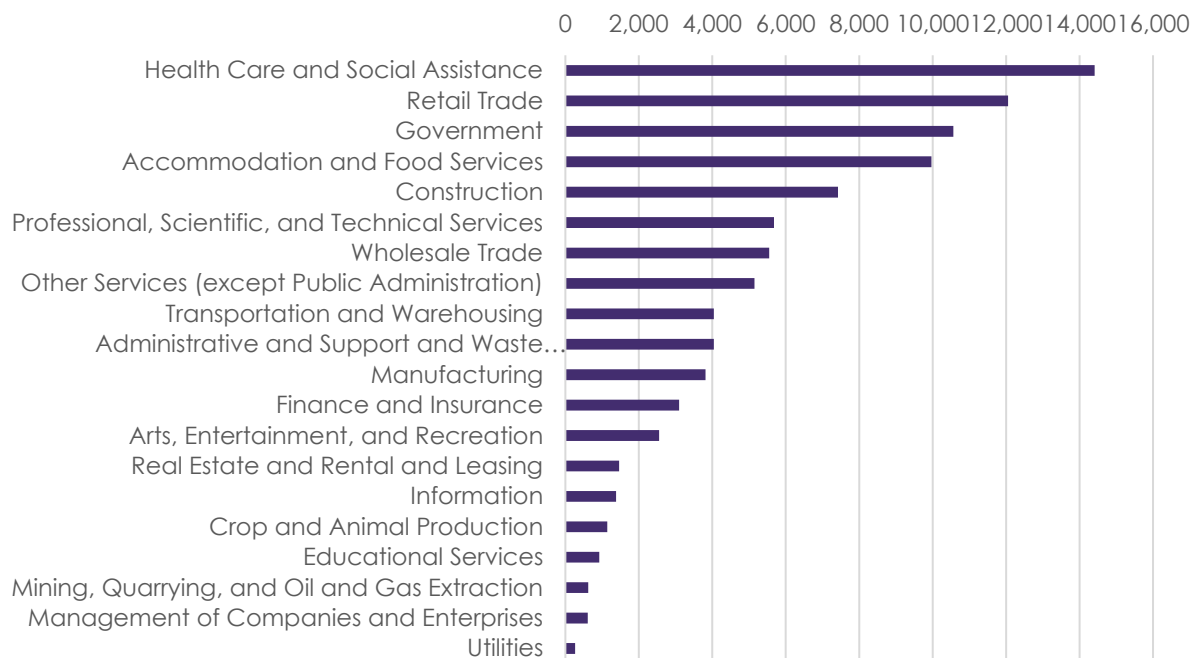
Additionally, due to the location of a major railroad in Billings, this report reviews industry trends for Railroad Transportation in the United States. This industry is growing across the country and the long-term outlook is positive. Demand for rail will increase as the labor market improves and as fuel prices remain low.

Due to the importance of arts and culture to downtown Billings, this report reviewed local data and national trends for industries in the Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, and Visitor cluster. Trends for visitor and recreation-based industries are generally positive. A new convention center associated with the One Big Sky Center could play a significant factor in growing this cluster.

2-DIGIT INDUSTRY OVERVIEW

This section reviews the broad industry sectors in the MSA. There are 94,759 jobs in the MSA. The largest industry is Health Care and Social Assistance, employing 14,411 in 2017 and accounting for 15.2% of all employment in the MSA. Retail Trade and Government each employ more than 10,000.

INDUSTRIES BY NUMBER OF JOBS IN 2017



Source: Emsi 2017.3

INDUSTRIES BY CHANGES IN JOBS

Between 2012 and 2017, Health Care and Social Assistance, Accommodation and Food Services, and Construction each added more than 1,000 jobs. Administrative and Support along with Waste Management and Remediation Services lost nearly one-third of all its employment, or 1,891 jobs. In the next five years, Health Care and Social Assistance is projected to grow by 1,080 jobs, or 7%.

NAICS	Description	2017 Jobs	2012 - 2017 Change	2012 - 2017 % Change	2017 - 2022 Change	2017 - 2022 % Change
62	Health Care and Social Assistance	14,411	1,078	8%	1,080	7%
44	Retail Trade	12,054	950	9%	675	6%
90	Government	10,562	245	2%	216	2%
72	Accommodation and Food Services	9,969	1,046	12%	495	5%
23	Construction	7,424	1,111	18%	647	9%
54	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	5,681	683	14%	471	8%
42	Wholesale Trade	5,548	98	2%	159	3%
81	Other Services (except Public Administration)	5,150	636	14%	325	6%
48	Transportation and Warehousing	4,042	267	7%	139	3%
56	Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	4,041	(1,891)	(32%)	3	0%
31	Manufacturing	3,815	334	10%	177	5%
52	Finance and Insurance	3,097	79	3%	33	1%
71	Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	2,553	409	19%	174	7%
53	Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	1,463	125	9%	50	3%
51	Information	1,381	308	29%	156	11%
11	Crop and Animal Production	1,142	(245)	(18%)	(96)	(8%)
61	Educational Services	924	(31)	(3%)	85	9%
21	Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	623	123	25%	95	15%
55	Management of Companies and Enterprises	607	(65)	(10%)	64	11%
22	Utilities	266	(94)	(26%)	(59)	(22%)
	TOTAL	94,759	5,164	6%	4,890	5%

Source: Emsi 2017.3

4-DIGIT INDUSTRY ANALYSIS

Focusing down from 2-digit NAICS sector-level data into 4-digit NAICS industry group-level data provides information about the more specific drivers of growth. Restaurants and Other Eating Places is the largest industry in the MSA with 7,299 jobs. General Medical and Surgical Hospital is second with 5,677, followed by local governments.

TOP 20 INDUSTRIES BY NUMBER OF CURRENT JOBS

NAICS	Description	2017 Jobs
7225	Restaurants and Other Eating Places	7,299
6221	General Medical and Surgical Hospitals	5,677
9036	Education and Hospitals (Local Government)	3,463
9039	Local Government, Excluding Education and Hospitals	2,387
4529	Other General Merchandise Stores	1,884
9011	Federal Government, Civilian	1,843
5617	Services to Buildings and Dwellings	1,596
7211	Traveler Accommodation	1,586
5413	Architectural, Engineering, and Related Services	1,577
2382	Building Equipment Contractors	1,508
5221	Depository Credit Intermediation	1,330
9026	Education and Hospitals (State Government)	1,239
5415	Computer Systems Design and Related Services	1,221
6231	Nursing Care Facilities (Skilled Nursing Facilities)	1,200
4238	Machinery, Equipment, and Supplies Merchant Wholesalers	1,162
5613	Employment Services	1,126
4511	Sporting Goods, Hobby, and Musical Instrument Stores	1,125
8111	Automotive Repair and Maintenance	1,121
3241	Petroleum and Coal Products Manufacturing	1,108
4451	Grocery Stores	1,081

Source: Emsi 2017.3

TOP 20 INDUSTRIES BY PROJECTED JOB CHANGE

The two largest industries in terms of jobs are also projected to add the most jobs in the next five years. Restaurants and Other Eating Places and General Medical and Surgical Hospitals are each projected to add 400 jobs between 2017 and 2022. Wired Telecommunications and Sporting Goods, Hobby, and Musical Instrument Stores are projected to have the highest percent change and add more than 200 jobs each.

NAICS	Description	2017 Jobs	2022 Jobs	2017 - 2022 Change	2017 - 2022 % Change
7225	Restaurants and Other Eating Places	7,299	7,702	403	6%
6221	General Medical and Surgical Hospitals	5,677	6,077	400	7%
4511	Sporting Goods, Hobby, and Musical Instrument Stores	1,125	1,401	276	25%
5171	Wired Telecommunications Carriers	612	826	214	35%
2371	Utility System Construction	866	1,062	196	23%
9039	Local Government, Excluding Education and Hospitals	2,387	2,556	169	7%
2382	Building Equipment Contractors	1,508	1,672	164	11%
5413	Architectural, Engineering, and Related Services	1,577	1,741	164	10%
7211	Traveler Accommodation	1,586	1,736	150	9%
6233	Continuing Care Retirement Communities and Assisted Living Facilities for the Elderly	673	822	149	22%
4529	Other General Merchandise Stores	1,884	2,022	138	7%
6212	Offices of Dentists	820	956	136	17%
2381	Foundation, Structure, and Building Exterior Contractors	909	1,030	121	13%
2361	Residential Building Construction	1,047	1,160	113	11%
5617	Services to Buildings and Dwellings	1,596	1,701	105	7%
4451	Grocery Stores	1,081	1,177	96	9%
8121	Personal Care Services	968	1,058	90	9%
8113	Commercial and Industrial Machinery and Equipment (except Automotive and Electronic) Repair and Maintenance	473	558	85	18%
6213	Offices of Other Health Practitioners	557	639	82	15%
6231	Nursing Care Facilities (Skilled Nursing Facilities)	1,200	1,282	82	7%

Source: Emsi 2017.3

TOP 20 INDUSTRIES BY COMPETITIVE EFFECT

The competitive effect (CE) metric seeks to isolate the influence of local dynamics from the influence of non-local factors on industries' employment growth or decline. A positive number indicates that the study area experienced more growth within a particular industry than would have been expected from national economic conditions and national industry conditions; the magnitude of the competitive effect indicates the strength of the purely local influence on the industry's employment change.

Wired Telecommunication Carriers; General Medical and Surgical Hospitals; and Sporting Goods, Hobby, and Musical Instrument Stores have the highest competitive effect. In other words, these industries in the MSA experience more growth than is expected.

NAICS	Description	Ind. Mix Effect	Nat'l Growth Effect	Expected Change	Competitive Effect
5171	Wired Telecommunications Carriers	(7)	8	1	514
6221	General Medical and Surgical Hospitals	(135)	423	288	476
4511	Sporting Goods, Hobby, and Musical Instrument Stores	12	67	79	273
2361	Residential Building Construction	44	61	105	232
9039	Local Government, Excluding Education and Hospitals	(115)	184	69	178
2111	Oil and Gas Extraction	(14)	9	(5)	170
3241	Petroleum and Coal Products Manufacturing	(80)	81	1	168
2383	Building Finishing Contractors	19	64	83	168
7132	Gambling Industries	(69)	64	(5)	163
8113	Commercial and Industrial Machinery and Equipment (except Automotive and Electronic) Repair and Maintenance	(5)	26	21	155
5221	Depository Credit Intermediation	(135)	105	(30)	143
4451	Grocery Stores	2	75	77	138
8131	Religious Organizations	(46)	70	24	128
4247	Petroleum and Petroleum Products Merchant Wholesalers	(5)	8	3	126
4842	Specialized Freight Trucking	0	40	40	123
4431	Electronics and Appliance Stores	(23)	24	1	121
2371	Utility System Construction	61	54	115	121
8121	Personal Care Services	4	68	72	112
3391	Medical Equipment and Supplies Manufacturing	(5)	5	0	112
6212	Offices of Dentists	9	56	65	109

Source: Emsi 2017.3

TOP 20 INDUSTRIES BY LOCATION QUOTIENT

Location Quotient (LQ) measures the relative importance of an industry's employment to a particular region, and uses the straightforward formula: [% of total local employment/% of total national employment]. Location Quotients are one of the most common and important indicators of local economic characteristics; LQs greater than 1.25 are typically considered to be the threshold for identifying an industry as especially strong.

Petroleum and Coal Products has the highest LQ in the MSA. This means the industry is nearly 17 times more concentrated in the region than average.

NAICS	Description	2017 LQ
3241	Petroleum and Coal Products Manufacturing	16.88
4911	Postal Service	13.24
4861	Pipeline Transportation of Crude Oil	11.79
7132	Gambling Industries	11.14
3322	Cutlery and Handtool Manufacturing	6.42
1152	Support Activities for Animal Production	5.49
1153	Support Activities for Forestry	5.06
4245	Farm Product Raw Material Merchant Wholesalers	4.73
3113	Sugar and Confectionery Product Manufacturing	4.41
4869	Other Pipeline Transportation	3.98
4247	Petroleum and Petroleum Products Merchant Wholesalers	3.73
4231	Motor Vehicle and Motor Vehicle Parts and Supplies Merchant Wholesalers	3.69
4821	Rail Transportation	3.50
2123	Nonmetallic Mineral Mining and Quarrying	3.39
4511	Sporting Goods, Hobby, and Musical Instrument Stores	3.28
7212	RV (Recreational Vehicle) Parks and Recreational Camps	3.25
8113	Commercial and Industrial Machinery and Equipment (except Automotive and Electronic) Repair and Maintenance	3.20
2373	Highway, Street, and Bridge Construction	3.13
4238	Machinery, Equipment, and Supplies Merchant Wholesalers	2.92

Source: Emsi 2017.3

RAILROAD TRANSPORTATION INDUSTRY TRENDS³⁹

RECENT TRENDS AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

In recent years, the Railroad Transportation industry has benefited from its combination of cost effectiveness, fuel efficiency, and mobility, making it an attractive mode of transportation. Furthermore, the industry is vital to the economic growth of the United States.

The industry is growing. As the US economy continues to see growth, the need to transport goods will grow. Increasing demand will be partially met by industry operators as users of transportation services seek greener and more affordable substitutes for freight trucking,

The fall of oil prices has resulted in lower expenses, improving industry profitability, but has also lowered operators' revenue from fuel surcharges. The US Department of Transportation estimates that by tonnage, demand for rail transportation will increase 88.0% by 2035. As manufacturing production increases and consumers begin to spend more, demand for Railroad Transportation services will increase.

The long-term outlook for Railroad Transportation is positive. IBISWorld forecasts that revenue for the Railroad Transportation industry will grow at an average annual rate of 3.4% to \$77.7 billion in the next five years to 2021. Freight volume and demand for Railroad Transportation will increase as the labor market improves, consumers spend more freely, and inventories are rebuilt.

³⁹ Information in this section comes from the November 2016 IBISWorld Industry Report 48211: Rail Transportation in the US.

SNAPSHOTS:

- The industry is **growing**.
- Market share concentration is **high**.
- Key external drivers are price of diesel, total trade value, industrial produce index, world price of steaming coal, and demand from chemical manufacturing.
- Revenue volatility is **medium**.
- Competition is **medium**, and the trend is **steady**.

SUPPLY CHAIN

Key Buying Industries are buyers of the Railroad Transportation industry. These industries rely on railroads for shipping goods and parts along with commuting. Key Selling Industries are industries from which the Railroad Transportation industry buys its inputs.



ARTS, ENTERTAINMENT, RECREATION, AND VISITOR CLUSTER

The table below looks at industries with the Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, and Visitor Cluster.⁴⁰ The industry within the cluster with the largest number of jobs and largest projected growth is Traveler Accommodation (i.e., hotels). Other Amusement and Recreation Industries, which includes places like golf courses, fitness and recreation centers, and skiing facilities, employs more than a thousand people and is projected to add 70 in the next five years. Gambling Industries has a high location quotient of 11.09, followed by RV Parks and Recreational Camps with 3.13.

⁴⁰ The industries included in the Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, and Visitor Cluster were based on definitions developed through a project led by Purdue Center for Regional Development. More information can be found at https://www.statsamerica.org/innovation/industry_clusters.html.

DOWNTOWN BILLINGS ALLIANCE
STRATEGIC PLAN



NAICS	Description	2017 Jobs	2022 Jobs	2017 - 2022 Change	2016 LQ	CE
7211	Traveler Accommodation	1,586	1,736	150	1.39	71
7139	Other Amusement and Recreation Industries	1,032	1,102	70	1.25	3
7132	Gambling Industries	903	967	64	11.09	8
5151	Radio and Television Broadcasting	252	233	(19)	1.93	(19)
7115	Independent Artists, Writers, and Performers	185	203	18	1.02	15
7212	RV (Recreational Vehicle) Parks and Recreational Camps	130	161	31	3.13	14
4239	Miscellaneous Durable Goods Merchant Wholesalers	135	148	13	0.72	1
7121	Museums, Historical Sites, and Similar Institutions	117	131	14	1.17	4
7112	Spectator Sports	111	113	2	1.00	(4)
5121	Motion Picture and Video Industries	111	110	(1)	0.39	(10)
7113	Promoters of Performing Arts, Sports, and Similar Events	78	87	9	0.85	2
5615	Travel Arrangement and Reservation Services	85	85	0	0.59	0
3399	Other Miscellaneous Manufacturing	111	84	(27)	0.64	(23)
7131	Amusement Parks and Arcades	56	72	16	0.41	12
7111	Performing Arts Companies	65	47	(18)	0.81	(22)
5152	Cable and Other Subscription Programming	15	17	2	0.44	2
4871	Scenic and Sightseeing Transportation, Land	<10	<10	Insf. Data	0.13	(0)
4872	Scenic and Sightseeing Transportation, Water	<10	<10	Insf. Data	0.05	(0)
5122	Sound Recording Industries	<10	<10	Insf. Data	0.02	0
7114	Agents and Managers for Artists, Athletes, Entertainers, and Other Public Figures	<10	<10	Insf. Data	0.23	1
4879	Scenic and Sightseeing Transportation, Other	0	0	0	0.00	0
TOTAL		4,982	5,303	321		55

Source: Emsi 2017.3

NATIONAL HOTEL INDUSTRY TRENDS⁴¹

Due to increases in travel spending, corporate profit, and consumer spending, hotel industry revenue has grown every year since 2012, as the economy improved and domestic and international travel rates increased. The industry has outperformed the broader economy over the past five years, driven by a combination of high demand from leisure and business travelers and international tourists. Over the five years, IBISWorld expects industry revenue to grow at an annualized rate of 4.4%.

Key external drivers are domestic trips by US residents, the consumer confidence index, consumer spending, and inbound trips by non-US residents. IBISWorld identifies six key success factors for a business in the hotels industry including access to multi-skilled and flexible workforce, being part of a franchising chain, receiving the benefit of word-of-mouth recommendations, proximity to key markets, ability to quickly adopt new technology, and ability to control stock on hand.

NATIONAL GAMBLING INDUSTRIES TRENDS⁴²

Increased competition and changing consumer preferences away from gambling have affected the non-hotel casino industry. Gambling revenue performed well over the last five years, as the unemployment decreased and consumer spending and traveling increased. However, long-standing casino operators have struggled, mainly due to an influx of new casino hotels in states that eased bans on casinos. New casinos cannibalized gambling revenue at destination casinos that have traditionally been gambling strongholds, as consumers chose to visit locations closer to home rather than traveling long distances to gamble. The industry's key external drivers are domestic trips by US residents, consumer spending, time spent on leisure and sports, and inbound trips by non-US residents.

NATIONAL RV PARKS AND RECREATIONAL CAMPS INDUSTRY TRENDS⁴³

Over the past five years, the Campgrounds and RV Parks industry has experienced steady growth. The industry is primarily driven by travel-related trends, as trips to campgrounds and RV parks are viewed as cost-efficient alternatives to traditional vacations. During the early part of the five-year period, cutbacks in travel and falling recreational vehicle sales contributed to disappointing years. However, rising employment and disposable income levels led to a surge in domestic travel. With consumer expenditure on travel growing, industry revenue is expected to increase over the next five years. Threats to this growth include increasing fuel prices and an appreciating dollar. However, the increasing age of the baby boomer population has the potential to increase demand. Additionally, increase in sales of RVs is expected to be a long-term trend.

⁴¹ Information in this section comes from the April 2017 IBISWorld Industry Report 72111: Hotels & Motels in the US

⁴² Information in this section comes from the May 2017 IBISWorld Industry Report 71321: Non-Hotel Casinos in the US

⁴³ Information in this section comes from the December 2016 IBISWorld Industry Report 72121: Campgrounds & RV Parks in the US

BANKING INDUSTRY

Banking was not identified as a key industry through the 4-digit NAICS industry analysis of job numbers, projected job change, location quotient, and competitive advantage. At the 2-digit level, the Finance and Insurance industry (which includes banks) accounts for roughly 3% of jobs in the MSA (3,100 jobs). Additionally, 4-digit industries (i.e., banks and brokerage) did not show a strong competitive effect or significant projected job growth. Location quotient for these industries was not high, which is not surprising since nearly all cities across the country have some amount of jobs related to banking.

However, the banking industry could be an opportunity for downtown Billings. The average earnings per jobs for Finance and Insurance industry is high in the MSA at \$81,709.⁴⁴ Individual 4-digit industries such as Securities and Commodity Contracts Intermediation and Brokerage have even higher average earnings per job. Additionally, Billings is the largest city in Montana, has university resources, and is headquarters for the largest bank in the state.

DEVELOPING STRATEGIES TO EXPAND KEY INDUSTRIES

Throughout the remaining months of the Downtown Billings Alliance strategic planning process, the Project Team will work with the Steering Committee, community stakeholders, and staff to explore the following economic development opportunities. These opportunities will initiate from objective data in this report and assumptions for the key industries, as well as other relevant industries including rail, banking, and arts, to develop specific strategies to expand the diversified downtown economy.

- **General Medical and Surgical Hospitals**
 - Expand clinical research and facilitate commercialization of medical devices and pharmaceuticals
 - Attract clinical research organizations (CROs)
 - Retain and expand corporate hospital functions
 - Create new service businesses
 - Emphasize and support Montana State University Billings programs including Allied Health Programs, Nursing Programs, and Pre-Professional Studies
- **Restaurants and Other Eating Places**
 - Restaurants represent excellent opportunities for entrepreneurs but also emphasize the authenticity of the downtown community and help to retain talent and corporate functions in downtown
- **Wired Telecommunication Carriers**
 - Assess the existing telecommunications and broadband infrastructure serving downtown businesses
 - Work with Montana State University Billings to ensure they are providing the educational resources needed to further develop the workforce for the Wired Telecommunication Carriers industry

⁴⁴ Source: Emsi 2017.3

- **Retail Stores - Sporting Goods, Hobby, and Musical Instrument Stores**
 - From Kampgrounds of America (KOA)'s corporate headquarters presence to mountain wear entrepreneur Aspinwall, Downtown Billings has an excellent opportunity to be recognized as the national headquarters of outdoor recreation, sporting goods, and outdoor wear
 - There are at least 47 Sporting Goods Stores in the Billings market
 - KOA, Aspinwall, and many others can form industry clusters and other partnerships to attract, expand, and create complementary outdoor recreation, sporting goods, and outdoor wear businesses
- **Petroleum and Coal Products Manufacturing**
 - Work with Montana State University Billings, other colleges, and high schools to ensure they are providing the educational resources needed to further develop the workforce for the Petroleum and Coal Products Manufacturing industry
 - Attract Petroleum and Coal Products Manufacturing firms' corporate headquarters or supportive corporate functions
- **Railroad Transportation Industry**
 - Facilitate the Railroad Transportation industry's needs while balancing the economic opportunity with the character of downtown
 - Leveraging Billings' founding and continued tradition, attract Railroad Transportation industry firms' corporate headquarters or supportive corporate functions
- **Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, and Visitor Cluster**
 - Leverage Billings' industrial-rail, cultural, and natural heritage to support existing arts initiatives and organizations, museums, and recreational assets
 - Champion the fact that Billings is the largest city in the state and position downtown as the cultural epicenter
- **Banking Industry**
 - Demonstrate the access to capital available to entrepreneurs, small and mid-sized businesses, and corporations to affirm that Billings has major banking institutions available to do business
 - Support the growth of the banking industry by championing the industry's role in community initiatives, lending to businesses, and housing
 - Ensure the connectivity between high-school and university students and the banking industry to demonstrate opportunities for high-wage and impactful careers

APPENDIX B: PEER DOWNTOWN REVIEW AND TRENDS REPORT

PEER COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONAL TRENDS:

The following is a summary of findings comparing the Downtown Billings Alliance to peer community downtown organizations. Not all information is available for all peer cities. Full research and raw data is available upon request.

The following report is organized as follows:

1. Organization
2. Budget and Funding Sources
3. Programming
4. Social Media and Web Outreach

COMPARABLE PEER COMMUNITIES:

Billings is unique in that it is the largest city in the state, but not a capital city, somewhat isolated, and surrounded by mountains and rural and Native American populations. The following communities were selected based on comparative population, size, and density.

Community	Population	Size	Density
Billings, MT	104,170	43.5 sq mi	2,399/sq mi
Arvada, CO	106,433	35.1 sq mi	3,029/sq mi
Cedar Rapids, IA	126,326	70.8 sq mi	1,784/sq mi
Fargo, ND	105,549	48.8 sq mi	2,162/sq mi
South Bend, IN	101,168	41.5 sq mi	2,440/sq mi

1. ORGANIZATION

Staffing and Structure

Staffing ranges from 6 full time staff and 100+ volunteers in Fargo and South Bend, to 24 on staff in Cedar Rapids.

Staff generally include Directors, Membership Services, Operations, and Communications. Interestingly, several peer communities list volunteers when discussing staff. This ranges from noting the number of volunteers or volunteer hours, or as detailed as the number of benches painted and planters filled.

Board Representation

The boards of the Downtown Billings Alliance are slightly better than average when compared to their peers in community representation. Others tend to have more total members, whether voting or non-voting, and/or paid or unpaid board seats. However, Downtown Billings appears to be comparable in the mix of small business, government, and large business/anchor representation.

One peer structure to consider is that of Cedar Rapids. In addition to their board, known as the Policy Council, they have an amazing representation from the community participating in different levels of the organization. This includes the following four Councils, each with unique responsibilities:

- Large Investor Council
- Business Support Innovation Council

- Community Development Innovation Council
- Economic Development Innovation Council

Communication

The community, funders, and stakeholders need to understand who is responsible for what roles and responsibilities if they are to continue to support the Alliance. This was most apparent in communities with a downtown organization and a separate Improvement District arm.

With three functioning arms of the Alliance, there is a risk of confusion. It is recommended that all marketing accurately reflects roles, responsibilities, and funding streams.

Transparency

In general, the peer communities are more transparent online about board representation, staffing, budget and funding sources. Fargo and South Bend offer the most transparent websites, with all information necessary for this report readily available. It was necessary to contact the others for one-to-two pieces of information. Much of the information is unavailable to the public via Downtown Billings' website.

The more transparent communities have an area dedicated to organizational information, including the most recent Annual Report. As an organization that accepts public and private funds, transparency is important. If not currently in practice, it is recommended that quality Annual Reports be created for the Alliance and made available to the public and funders online. In addition, those with Improvement Districts offer separate annual and 10-year reports of the District's finances and successes, ranging from the number of holiday lights strung, items of graffiti removed, and total pounds of trash removed.

Fargo has a nice "Downtown by the Numbers" section in their Annual Report outlining total number of acres, residents, employees, students, and different types of businesses. South Bend and Fargo also include above average reports of social media impact and tracking, including a mix of the following:

- Net gain
- New followers
- Unique users
- Mentions
- Comments
- Posts reach
- User of origin
- Average session duration
- E-blast open rate

2. BUDGET AND FUNDING SOURCES

Budgets for the various organizations are difficult to compare because total income and expenses are available for most peer cities, but not all include a breakdown of sources or expenses. Furthermore, some budgets include Improvement District finances with the downtown organization, some do not, and some do not have additional Improvement arms. Overall, budgets range from \$450,000 to \$3,500,000.

Membership

Peer community organizations range anywhere from \$50-500+ in Arvada, to \$1,000-\$25,000+ in Cedar Rapids. With a current range of \$1,500-\$7,500+, the DBA levels of membership seem to be missing a lot of opportunity for funding and membership participation at the individual, student, family, and small business levels, in the \$50-\$250 range.

Sponsorship

It is difficult to ascertain how DBA funds programming or secures sponsors.

For a best peer practice, Cedar Rapids had a very clear and organized sponsorship package, available at: https://www.cedarrapids.org/application/files/8314/6773/1205/Sponsorship_Opportunities.pdf

3. PROGRAMMING

Downtown Billings has a good mix of programming when compared to peer communities, including visitor and resident offerings, and membership promotions. The range of events throughout the year does a very good job of targeting different age groups, when compared to other communities. Fargo and Arvada appear to focus on fewer, more traditional signature events with large numbers of attendees, while Cedar Rapids and South Bend offer large events, in addition to a more diverse menu of programming, including:

- Ribbon-cuttings
- Façade grants
- Scholarships for business training and certification maintenance
- Annual awards for unique, homegrown businesses
- Networking events for existing businesses and entrepreneurs
- Farmers markets
- Vacant housing and building tours

Measure Impacts

Programming and events often serve as the visibility of a downtown organization; however, it can prevent an organization from serving other important functions. Our desktop research does not allow us the information to measure the impact of existing programming in Downtown Billings.

It is common to question the time and resources dedicated to the funding, planning, and execution of certain programs. It is recommended that Downtown Billings create a system to evaluate the impact of each program on the success of downtown and the organization, as compared to the real cost of time and resources, as well as the opportunity cost of a different offering.

For example, events, programs, and offerings of the organization should be evaluated on more than net profit, including, but not limited to the following:

- Impact to residents and local businesses
- Target audiences reached
- Supporting levels of business from pop-up to well-established
- Promotion of downtown and/or the organization

It is a general rule of thumb to attempt an event three times with various tweaks and additional outreach, before eliminating it and moving on to other things. It is also important to calculate the hourly cost of staff time for an accurate budget.

Resources and Partnerships

The website is very attractive, but appears to focus primarily on the organization and its offerings. For example, the Downtown Development page on the website is recommended to be pulled out as its own category so potential investors do not have to hunt for information under the Alliance tab.

In addition, non-DBA resources and development information could be added, including links to important resources, development partners, and additional incentives offered in the city and state.

Consider partnering with local non-profits, businesses, and churches to offer a year-round calendar of downtown offerings to increase the organizations' capacity. Downtowns with organizations that celebrate a full calendar of events, regardless of the organizer, appear more exciting and alive. This included everything from library events, to bands playing at downtown establishments.

4. SOCIAL MEDIA AND WEB OUTREACH

Below is a cursory review of social media pertaining to Downtown Billings. This is a superficial media review, performed through the eyes of a first-time visitor or resident trying to connect to the area or the organization, and not a full social media audit. Data was collected in early September 2017.

Website

Downtown Billings is in the top of the peer group regarding web design/presence. Though some pages weren't working at the time of this report, those that were featured a modern design with high quality images and videos. The target appeared to be a good mix of current resident, prospective resident, and visitor information. Promoting existing businesses also shows potential investors how their company can thrive in Downtown Billings, and the website does a fairly good job of that. A promising practice in the peer communities was to offer a downtown shopping and paring guide. While very attractive, the current downtown guide fails to serve the purpose of peer communities' interactive, color-coded maps, linked to additional business information. Arvada and Fargo have great examples of such maps.

Social Media

Downtown Billings seems to reach audiences best by Facebook and then Instagram, with Twitter being a distant third. In general, the DBA is doing about average with their social media efforts when compared to peer communities. This means that there is room for growth and improvement. Below is a summary of Downtown Billings' performance on the different platforms.

Those that used handles that followed their organization name, rather than a pattern of "@Downtown XXX" were much harder to find in searches and less likely tagged. Similarly, hashtags of "#DowntownXXX" were much more prevalent in searches. For example, #oldetownarvada showed 5,136 posts at the time of the search, while #HistoricOldeTownArvada only showed eight posts on Twitter. People are more likely to tag something as its colloquial location name than that of an organization. Downtown Billings is doing a good job of consistency in this regard.

Facebook: @DowntownBillings

Billings was ranked 2nd in the number of total likes on Facebook, but fell just short of the average of 12,192, with 11,615 likes. This is due to outliers of 5,969 in Cedar Rapids and 21,585 in South Bend. The Downtown South Bend organization may be a peer to watch for trends.

Facebook now offers a review option for organizations. Downtown Billings received 50 reviews with an average of 4.3/5.0. They were tied for the lowest ranking; however, 35/50 reviews were 5.0. Organizations should pay attention to the 1-3 star reviews, and potentially reach out to the reviewers for direct feedback, if it is not included with their post. Sometimes the lowest review can be for something small that can be addressed immediately, as well as offering the opportunity to change the mind of a potential return visitor.

Instagram: @downtownbillings #downtownbillings

Downtown Billings came in 3rd for number of Instagram followers and 3rd in number of posts, with one peer community not utilizing the program at all. The energy on Instagram does not seem to be wasted, as @downtown_fargo page would be worth evaluating for trends, as they have garnered by far the most followers, at 6,513 with only 185 posts, compared to Downtown Billings with 1,303 followers with 188 posts. The #downtownfargo is also the most organically tagged at 13,2018, compared to an average of 4,711. For comparison, #downtownbillings has been tagged 3,726 at the time of this report.

Twitter: @dwntwnbillings

Downtown Billings ranked 5th compared to peer group in number of followers and 4th in number of total tweets. When the number of followers is compared to the number of tweets issued, it appears that the DBA may be expending an inordinate amount of energy on Twitter for a very low number of followers; only 236 since August of 2015. It is recommended that Downtown Billings work to increase the number of followers, or spend less energy tweeting and more time communicating on Facebook and Instagram.

While not imperative, it seems that the handle @downtownbillings existed at some point in 2015 with only 2 posts. If available, it is recommended that you change your Twitter handle to something closer to @downtownbillings or @downtown_billings to conform to your online social media presence, and follow the pattern of peer groups.

	Facebook Likes	Facebook Rating	Number of Facebook Reviews	Instagram Followers	Instagram Posts	Organic Instagram Tags	Twitter Followers	Tweets
Downtown Billings	11,615	4.3	50	1,303	188	3,726	236	765
Arvada	11,330	4.7	96	-	-	5,136	582	127
Cedar Rapids*	5,969	4.3	15	826	138	767	2,350	2,519
Fargo	10,459	4.8	87	6,513	185	13,218	8,747	1,452
South Bend	21,585	4.4	254	4,643	612	1,475	10,600	5,145
Average	12,192	4.5	100	2,657	225	4,864	4,503	2,002
Rank	2	5	4	3	2	3	5	4

*Activity of the Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance was rated in lieu of a less utilized, additional Downtown Cedar Rapids campaign.

APPENDIX C: PUBLIC FORUM ENGAGEMENT ANALYSIS

PUBLIC FORUM:

The Project Team conducted a Community Public Forum through which all Billings residents could express their opinions on various components affecting downtown Billings, including culture, aesthetics, safety, and economics. More than 120 community members attended and participated in the event. At the forum, participants were presented with several discussion topics and activities designed to elicit opinions for enhancing economic development in the community. TPMA facilitated a Visual Preference Survey in which each participant rated images on a -5 to +5 scale to convey preferences on aesthetics and quality of place.

In another activity, public forum contributors had a chance to make their “CASE” about the future of Billings. During the Make Your CASE activity, participants worked in small groups to develop ideas to improve or enhance the following topics:

- Downtown Living
- Nightlife
- Entertainment & Dining
- Native American Inclusion
- Parking & Transportation
- Pedestrian & Bike Facilities
- Parks, Plazas & Open Space
- Clean & Safe




After brainstorming ideas, participants were given 20 minutes to select the top 2-3 ideas from their groups and identify if the idea applied to cultural impact, aesthetic impact, safety impact, or economic impact. Each group was then instructed to select one idea, and to share it with the entire room in 30 seconds, to make their case. After reporting out idea, each group was given five minutes to write their 2-3 best ideas on a large flip chart paper, which were posted around the public forum room based on each groups corresponding topic. This prepared the public forum members for the following investment portfolio activity.



The investment portfolio activity allowed public forum participants to rank each groups ideas from the Make Your CASE activity. Participants were given four stickers that each represented one fourth of a budget that could be invested in any idea. Participants were allowed five minutes to walk throughout the public forum room to observe each idea posted on the large flip chart papers from the previous activity. Participants were instructed to place a dot sticker next to the four ideas they would invest money into to implement.

Following the public forum, the project team aggregated all forms and flip chart papers to identify community priorities in relation to the visual preference survey, Make Your CASE activity, and investment portfolio. The results of the Community Public Forum are included below.

VISUAL PREFERENCE SURVEY

The following table illustrates the number and image for each slide shown during the public forum for the visual preference survey, along with the aggregated score from attendee's responses. Additionally, this table notes any positive and negative comments related to each image.

#	Image	Score	Comments
#1		2.35	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Modern and urban downtown - Looks too much like Las Vegas
#2		1.79	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Favorable colors on the promenade - Looks to fast paced
#3		3.05	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Approval of the blend of historic and modern feels - Sidewalks seem too narrow

#	Image	Score	Comments
#4		3.29	+ Likes the grass and the common gathering area
#5		4.09	+ Adds an element of texture to downtown

DOWNTOWN BILLINGS ALLIANCE
STRATEGIC PLAN

Billings ^{Downtown}
Starts here.

#6



1.48

- + Brings art and culture to a space that has more than one use
- Looks like a lot of wasted space

#7



2.47

- + Likes the designated bike and pedestrian areas
- Does not like the sidewalk and bike path on two sides

#	Image	Score	Comments
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#8



1.04

- + Like the art in the community
- Downtown Billings is not Las Vegas

#9



2.68

- + Likes the people interacting
- + Attainable because Billings has alleyways that can be converted

#10



0.59



- + Would add needed housing to downtown
- Boring, doesn't fit with downtown's current buildings

#11





1.15

- + Illustrates activation of a neglected urban space

#	Image	Score	Comments
#12		3.26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Would be nice to have greenspace between the roads in Billings
#13		-3.21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Functional - The big pole in the middle looks horrible - Obstructions - Too close to traffic - "It is 27th street today"
#14		1.66	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Likes that this caters to children because downtown needs aspects like that - Nothing happening on the street
#15		-3.73	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Looks like an auto dominated space that is un-inviting - Not enough local small businesses

#	Image	Score	Comments
#16		0.09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Good way to get the community moving + Incorporates art + Brings crosswalk to the attention of drivers - Does not like the zig zags
#17		1.97	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Likes that the river is incorporated + Provides a history - The historic markers block the view - Do not put the tall pieces in front of the view
#18		2.85	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + The complete streets are safer - Could have chosen a better green

#	Image	Score	Comments
#19		0.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Would be good to have more foot traffic + It is simple yet interesting
#20		2.36	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Cultural reference is good + Incorporates public art - Thinks this could encourage graffiti

MAKE YOUR CASE ACTIVITY

The following table illustrates each groups two or three big ideas from the Make Your CASE activity and tables indicates the topic each group was assigned along with a description of their big ideas. The far right column in this table illustrates the category (C, A, S, or E), that each group categorized their idea into.

Category	Idea	CASE
Downtown Living	Downtown living is based on how the economy is doing. 1st & 2nd Streets are very vibrant.	E
Downtown Living	Needs to be appealing to drive through and walk through. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charming! • Nice place to park your car. • Need to tell our story better, better perception management on safety and parking services. It is not visible. • Need more family space 	A
Downtown Living	Local Option Tax	
Native American Culture	Adding or changing street names or buildings to native American names. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate the native language more. 	C
Native American Culture	Solicit artist for more native presence (buffalo sculptures)	C
Native American Culture	Display tribal flags in downtown Billings.	C
Entertainment and Dining	Rooftop terraces/ Patio Areas with Dining Facilities, Background Dining Music, and Cocktails	E
Entertainment and Dining	Walking Mall. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entertaining, • Possible venue for small wine business 	CS
Entertainment and Dining	Collaboration – Cross pollinating for both dining and entertainment. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not necessarily an emphasis on the music but rather a combination of experiences incorporating Rooftop Terraces/Patio Area - Dining 	CE
Parks, Plazas, and Open Spaces	Public Space such as rooftop venues, places to gather for performances and socializing, that are well lit and aesthetically pleasing. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pocket Patios. 	CASE
Parking and Transportation	Transport- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pedal bars, safe bike lanes, more Ubers available 	SE
Entertainment and Dining	Food/drink – food trucks, especially if they are open late so you can get something without driving when bars close. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local, small, craft, sustainable 	CAE

Parks, Plazas, and Open Spaces	A way to Bring the downtown community to the river via trails, boardwalks, parks to incorporate the river, promote the river recreation	AE
Parks, Plazas, and Open Spaces	Utilize Yellowstone riverfront for music venue in summer. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gathering place for visitors and residents. Encourage boats to dock. Many out of town groups come to shop Billings any weekend and would stay overnight if there were fun things to do. 	CAE
Parks, Plazas, and Open Spaces	Access to parks and venues along the river	CAE
Parks, Plazas, and Open Spaces	All in one inclusive area and plaza that is a multipurpose, permanent space, with seating, performance capabilities surrounded by retail & living spaces	CASE
Parks, Plazas, and Open Spaces	Green Spaces such as rooftop gardens, pocket parks, plants on sidewalks lining streets	CA
Parks, Plazas, and Open Spaces	Designated Pedestrian/Biking Areas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plaza walking/biking paths NO CARS 	ASE
Parking and Transportation	Traffic flow with one ways. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make core streets 2-way. Keep peripheral streets one way 	SE
Parking and Transportation	Use of Alleys as common/green space. Better lighting	CASE
Parking and Transportation	Bike Lanes/ Pedestrian paths (w/ bike racks). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get rid of side street parking and turn it into a bike/pedestrian lane 	CASE
Parking and Transportation	Parking garage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise cost of downtown parking to offset renovation, etc. Replaces side street parking. Urban Art okay. Lights in garage = safety. Ability to pay w/ card maybe rewards system (i.e. 16th park is free.) 	AS
Down Town Living	Entertainment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More events geared towards kids. Built in kid activities, street performers and entertainment at fairs. Also would like built in activities. Miss the piano @ Skypoint as well 	C
Downtown Living	Variety of living options in terms of price (Low, middle, high)	CE

Downtown Living	Improved Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • grocery stores • drug stores • virtual services 	E
Downtown Living	Residential Parking	ASE
Pedestrian and Bike Facilities	Dedicated bike lanes throughout downtown especially on main corridors with dividers like trees and landscaping	CASE
Pedestrian and Bike Facilities	Reasons to walk & enjoy downtown (perceived safety, art, landscaping, more people walking, more patrons, stronger community)	CASE
Pedestrian and Bike Facilities	Crosswalks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improved and enhanced awareness • attention getting • public education of pedestrian rights 	CSE
Parking and Transportation	Transportation improvements – remove one ways	CASE
Downtown Living	Housing – affordable mixed income workforce housing	
Parks, Plazas, and Open Spaces	Plaza that serves as a central gathering space <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • prevent street closures, • Central gathering space public events / shows. 	CASE
Entertainment and Dining	More music – variety of venues and times of day, incentivize lunch band	CAE
Entertainment and Dining	Food trucks/ dedicated food truck area. Central Database of all local eateries that posts specials	CE
Entertainment and Dining	Address winter activities, reinforce branding of billings as a trailhead, more festivals, multi-generational activities, think about parking in winter	CASE
Pedestrian and Bike Facilities	Pedestrian open space + meaningful retail, to draw people in	CASE
Pedestrian and Bike Facilities	Traffic control to slow down traffic, wider sidewalks, two lanes, bulb outs	AS
Pedestrian and Bike Facilities	Designated Bike lanes throughout downtown	CSE
Parking and Transportation	Light Rail/ Trolley	CASE
Parking and Transportation	Create water features/ water taxi on Yellowstone River <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance river access/water availability. • Make water front a draw for commercial businesses 	CASE
Parking and Transportation	Full complete streets (100% bikeable/walkable downtown)	CASE
Clean and safe	Alley Cleaning (Would make useable for business, stop trash from blowing around, businesses share cost)	AS
Clean and Safe	Improve Down Town Lighting (safety)	CASE

Clean and Safe	More housing w/ neighborhood identities (fill out public space, would support mall/plaza, would support public transit)	CSE
Parking and Transportation	Utilize our garages <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • better signage for garages, • safety cameras • incentives such as stamping/passes or business adopting our city garages 	CASE
Parking and Transportation	Shuttle services to the medical and metro corridors, should be historical themed w/ simple routes, Parking meters that take credit cards	CASE
Parking and Transportation	Add a balance of two-way/one-way streets, traffic calming, improve retail	CASE
Native American Inclusion	Heritage celebration events <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • historical accurate presentation • November Native Month • Elevate and integrate 	CAE
Native American Inclusion	Workforce development - Transportation and unemployment rate	CSE
Native American Inclusion	Native American Inclusion council as city level	CSE
Clean and Safe	Work on perception of safety and continue to improve how we tell our story <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more open stores than restaurants • more lighting to liven the streets at night • create spaces where people want to be all year long 	CASE
Clean and Safe	Location of social services – co-locate, create a campus	CSE

INVESTMENT PORTFOLIO ACTIVITY

The following table illustrates preferences of public forum participants during the investment portfolio activity. Tables indicates the topic each group was assigned along with a description of their big ideas. The far right column in this table includes the number of dot stickers that were placed with each ideas. Similar ideas have been grouped together to eliminate redundancy and to provide a more accurate understanding of participants' priorities.

Category	Idea	# Stickers
Pedestrian and Bike Facilities	Pedestrian Greenspace <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bike lanes • wider sidewalks • complete streets 	39
Pedestrian and Bike Facilities	Reasons to walk and enjoy downtown	3
Pedestrian and Bike Facilities	Traffic calming (light timing, narrower streets, fewer lanes, pedestrian islands, bulb-outs, place making) River to Rims!	7
Parking and Transportation	Trolley and/or Light Rail	26
Parking and Transportation	Canal-Downtown water features	6
Parking and Transportation	Add more parking garages/ parking garage enhancement	4
Parking and Transportation	Downtown Shuttle	5
Parking and Transportation	One-way/ two-way street conversion	16
Clean and Safe	Use alleys as common marketplace and greenspaces. Improve lighting	16
Clean and Safe	Alley cleaning	3
Clean and Safe	Improve Downtown lighting	1
Downtown Living	Pass local option authority	43
Downtown Living	Centralized social services	2
Downtown Living	More downtown housing /Variety of living options (low-mid-high)	45
Downtown Living	Improved services for groceries, drugstores, local virtual services	24
Downtown Living	Residential Parking	3
Entertainment and Dining	Variety of Music venues and artists: Use "district" concept, have lunch bands	7
Entertainment and Dining	Encourage food trucks at a variety of times (i.e. after 8pm) and places to augment restaurant hours	4
Entertainment and Dining	Winter activities to make downtown a 365-day destination. (multi-generational, incorporate entertainment and dining, consistency)	2

Entertainment and Dining	Rooftop terraces/ patio areas: dining facilities, music, & cocktails	27
Entertainment and Dining	Walking mall – sidewalk pedestrian venue for music and theatres	10
Entertainment and Dining	Partnerships between dining establishments & theater & music. “dinner and a movie performance”	1
Native Cultures	Native American Heritage Center that hosts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • events • art • education • celebration 	19
Native Cultures	Commission on Native American Initiatives (N.A. Partners)	8
Native Cultures	Native language inclusion on street and other structural signs	7
Native Cultures	Display tribal flags w/ USA and MT flags	8
Native Cultures	Use the horse and buffalo culture to tell and celebrate the tribal stories, influence, and heritage of Billings	1
Native Cultures	Native operated horse transportation system in downtown billings (old fashioned stable in old building)	3
Native Cultures	Activities telling native stories around historic sites that includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • languages • history • food • art • geography • literature • contemporary life 	5
Nightlife	Late night transportation – pedicabs, fun drinking pedal busses	3
Parks Plazas and Open Spaces	All in one inclusive area that is a multipurpose outdoor plaza with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • seating and performance capabilities, • retail • living • green spaces 	38
Parks Plazas and Open Spaces	Downtown to river access	22
Parks Plazas and Open Spaces	Venues on the river	19

THE TOP 12 HIGHEST RANKED IDEAS INCLUDE:

1. More downtown housing with a variety of living options at all price levels (low, medium, and high) – 45 votes
2. Pass a local option authority – 43 votes
3. Pedestrian Greenspace, Bike lanes, wider sidewalks, complete streets – 39
4. All in one inclusive area that is a multipurpose outdoor plaza with seating and performance capabilities, retail, living, and green spaces – 38
5. Rooftop terraces/ patio areas: dining facilities, music, & cocktails – 27
6. Trolley and/or Light Rail – 26
7. Improved services for groceries, drugstores, local virtual services – 24
8. Downtown to river access – 22
9. Native American Heritage Center that hosts events, art, education, celebration – 19
10. Venues on the river – 19
11. Use alleys as common marketplace and greenspaces. Improve lighting – 16
12. One-way/ two-way street conversion – 16

APPENDIX D: FUNDING SCAN

FUNDING SCAN

MONTANA MAIN STREET PROGRAM

After speaking to program staff, it appears that the Downtown Billings Alliance is in good standing as an Affiliate member of the Montana Main Street Program. There is an opportunity with some more holistic downtown work and regular reporting to become an accredited member of the program, which would open up more opportunities from the state program and reduce the required matching requirements of future grant applications.

Currently, the DBA is eligible to apply for a portion of a \$100,000 Montana Main Street Program grant pool for the purposes of planning or physical implementation of placemaking activities. This pool has grown larger and over the past few years and is better situated to spread funds throughout the state, including a city the size of Billings.

OUR TOWN GRANT

The National Endowment of Arts has the Our Town grant that funds projects. Our Town offers support for projects in two areas:

- Arts Engagement, Cultural Planning, and Design Projects. These projects represent the distinct character and quality of their communities. These projects require a partnership between a nonprofit organization and a local government entity, with one of the partners being a cultural organization. Matching grants range from \$25,000 to \$200,000.
- Projects that Build Knowledge about Creative Placemaking. These projects are available to arts and design service organizations, and industry, policy, or university organizations that provide technical assistance to those doing place-based work. Matching grants range from \$25,000 to \$100,000.

ARTPLACE AMERICA

ArtPlace has four core areas of activity: a national grants program that annually supports creative placemaking projects in communities of all sizes across the country; ArtPlace Community Development Investments in 6 place-based community planning and development organizations that are working to permanently and sustainably incorporate arts and culture into their core work; field building strategies that work to connect and grow the field of practitioners; and research strategies to understand, document, and disseminate successful creative placemaking practices.

There are one-off projects by locals that grow into more, too. The CoSign project, started in a Cincinnati neighborhood, commissioned artists to put in beautiful signage to makeover a neglected block. Investing in public spaces has been shown to increase civic engagement and citizen pride.

HEART OF THE COMMUNITY

The Southwest Airlines Heart of the Community program was developed to support and activate public spaces in the heart of cities. Launched in April 2014, the program aims to support Placemaking – a movement that reimagines public spaces as the heart of every community. Through a multi-year partnership with PPS, Southwest Airlines is committed to leveraging the power of Placemaking to strengthen connections between people and the places they share and to spark social, economic, and environmental benefits in communities across the country.

PLACEMAKING MICRO-GRANTS

NAR's Placemaking Initiative encourages REALTOR® associations and their members, to engage in Placemaking in their communities. The Placemaking Micro-Grant is available to REALTOR® associations to help them plan, organize, implement and maintain Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper Placemaking activities in their communities. REALTORS® are uniquely positioned to help communities build better public spaces, with their vested interest in making sure people can purchase homes in areas with a strong sense of place.

IOBY ONLINE FUNDRAISING PLATFORM

IOBY helps neighbors grow and implement great ideas one block at a time. Their crowd-resourcing platform connects leaders with funding and support to make our neighborhoods safer, greener, more livable, and more fun. IOBY believes that it should be easy to make meaningful change “in our backyards” – the positive opposite of NIMBY. IOBY's platform gives everyone the ability to organize all kinds of capital—cash, social networks, in-kind donations, volunteer time, advocacy—from within the neighborhood to make the neighborhood a better place to live.

BEN AND JERRY'S GRASSROOTS ORGANIZING FOR SOCIAL CHANGE PROGRAM⁴⁵

The Grassroots Organizing for Social Change Program offers general or project support to non-profit organizations throughout the United States and is Ben and Jerry's most competitive grant program.

The Grassroots Organizing for Social Change Program makes one-year grants for up to \$25,000, to organizations with budgets under \$500,000. Only organizations with 501(c)3 status, or who have a fiscal agent with this status are eligible to apply.

While this organizations broad goals are to further social and environmental justice and support sustainable and just food systems, The Grassroots Organizing for Social Change Program focuses on the types of activities and strategies an organization uses for creating social change rather than on the specific issues the organization is addressing.

FORD FOUNDATION CHALLENGING INEQUALITY⁴⁶

For Foundation Challenging Inequality has identified five underlying drivers of inequality—common factors that, worldwide, contribute to inequality's many manifestations.

- **ENTRENCHED CULTURAL NARRATIVES** that undermine fairness, tolerance, and inclusion
- **FAILURE TO INVEST IN AND PROTECT VITAL PUBLIC GOODS** such as education and natural resources
- **UNFAIR RULES OF THE ECONOMY** that magnify unequal opportunity and outcomes
- **UNEQUAL ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT** decision making and resources
- **PERSISTENT PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION** against women, people with disabilities and racial, ethnic, and caste minorities

⁴⁵ <http://benandjerrysfoundation.org/the-grassroots-organizing-for-social-change-program/>

⁴⁶ <https://www.fordfoundation.org/work/our-grants/>

To address and respond to these drivers, Ford Foundation works and makes grants in interconnected areas that together work to challenge inequality. These areas include:

- Civic Engagement and Government
- Creativity and Free Expression
- Equitable Development
- Gender, Racial and Ethnic Justice, Inclusive Economies
- Internet Freedom
- Youth and Opportunity Learning

APPENDIX E: FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

DBA FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

The Downtown Billings Alliance (The Alliance) is the umbrella entity for the Downtown Billings Partnership (DBP), Downtown Billings Partnership (BID), and Downtown Billings Association, Inc. (DBA).

DOWNTOWN BILLINGS PARTNERSHIP FUNDS

Funds for the DBP are generated through a Tax Increment Financing District (TIF). Expenditures of TIF-generated revenues are subject to certain restrictions and must be spent within the district. The funds generated from a new TIF district could be used to finance projects such as street and parking improvements, tree planting, installation of new bike racks, trash containers and benches, and other streetscape beautification projects within the designated area.

BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT FUNDS

Funds for the BID are generated through assessments, contracts for services, donations and Grants. These Funds are used to support Clean and Safe Initiatives, Spare Change for Real Change, Community Innovations, Downtown Resource Officers, and the BID Street Team.

DOWNTOWN BILLINGS ASSOCIATION FUNDS

Fund for the Downtown Billings Association are generated through membership dues, event revenue, parking programs, and Green Meters. These funds are used to support events, place making, advocacy, and marketing.

FINANCIAL SWOT ANALYSIS

The project team analyzed The Alliance's Financials based on Downtown Billing Alliance total revenue, Downtown Billings Alliance total expenditures, partnership/TIF revenue, partnership/TIF expenditures, BID total revenue, and BID total Expenditures. Findings from this analysis are sorted into Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats in the following figure:



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Billings Downtown
Starts here.